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Window on Jordan

The wonderful world of one dinar shops

By Star Staff Writer

LADIES AND gents, gather 'round: This is your big chance to get a stylish wardrobe for less than JD 10. There is a new shopping craze in Jordan—shops that sell anything you could possibly want, and for just a single dinar.

Well, practically anything. From Amman to Marka to Zerga, and throughout most of the rest of the country, one dinar shops are beginning to catch on.

The shops began with the idea of providing a cushion for the poor and underprivileged in society. Yet since they offer excellent value for the money—and also because they are often the source of the latest off-beat fashion craze—they are usually crawling with bargain hunters from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds—some looking for clothes their families at a reasonable price, while others search out what may become the latest ultra-chic style.

Regardless what you're looking for, you can find practically anything you ever wanted in the shops, and for only a dinar—often even less. And it means everything. The quality may sometimes be low, but there are real bargains to be had for those who take their time and have an inclination to shop around. Who knows—you may turn up a real fashion gem as well as additions to your day-to-day wardrobe: Trousers, shirts, pyjamas, socks, underwear, lingerie, footwear, baby clothes.

There's also furniture, table settings, utensils, glassware and cutlery, sheets and blankets—every household need down to the last essential clothespin can be found. You look hard enough, and all for a single JD. For those in search of style and elegance, there are cosmetics and perfumes—the latter especially popular around Mother's Day—as well as jewelry gone out of fashion that become fashionable again when worn in different combinations. Think of it: Pure style for only a single JD. It's hard to

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The Star

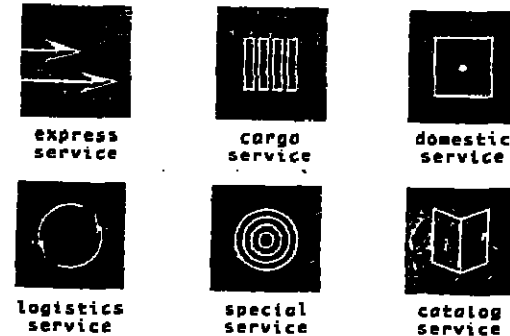
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

- Le bon vieux temps de la télé de papa!
- Qui a volé la chemise d'Elvis?

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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

No promises of concessions, progress Netanyahu takes hard line to 'last stand' in London

By John Daniszewski

CAIRO, Egypt—Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday pushed Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to agree to withdraw from most West Bank territory next week when Israeli and Palestinian leaders are to meet in London with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

It was the first meeting in more than a year between Netanyahu and Mubarak, whose relationship has been frosty. That this session occurred at all reflected the crucial phase the peace process is entering in the next few days.

On Monday, Albright is to confer separately with Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to try to win acceptance for a US proposal for a further redeployment by Israel from the West Bank, under Israeli occupation since the 1967 Middle East War.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said Tuesday that the London meeting would be the region's "moment of truth." US officials in Washington last week suggested it was shaping up as a "make or break" event for further American participation in the 6-year-old peace process.

But the Israeli government, showing no sign of giving in to the US proposal, has been playing down the gravity of the meeting.

The US plan has not been unveiled by President Clinton but has been widely reported in Israel and elsewhere. In exchange for security guar-

tees from the Palestinians, Washington wants an Israeli pullback from a further 13 percent of West Bank territory, a figure reportedly already accepted by the Palestinians. Netanyahu's Cabinet, however, has agreed to a maximum of 9 percent.

The 90-minute meeting between Mubarak and Netanyahu focused on the peace

"solid ground," and would help resume talks between Israel, Syria and Lebanon.

After returning to Israel, Netanyahu indicated that he had taken a tough stance, saying Israel alone could not be asked to make concessions to reach a deal with the Palestinians. "We stretch ourselves to the limit, beyond our limit," he said. "We're willing to be

flexible in areas that are difficult for us but, it cannot be that Israel is the only one that is asked to make compromises and the other side is supposed to merely sit pretty and wait for those concessions to come forth."

Netanyahu said he expected to be branded an obstacle to peace. "So what? I will do what I think is important to achieve a secure peace, a real peace, a defensible peace for Israel. Nothing will make me change that."

Immediately after seeing off Netanyahu, Mubarak met with US Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk, who re-emphasized the importance the United States is putting on the London talks.

"We're very concerned about the consequences if we do not now achieve a breakthrough and put the process back on track," Indyk said. Israel has sought to downplay the sessions in Britain, with Netanyahu saying Monday, "We hope there will be progress, but I cannot guarantee that."

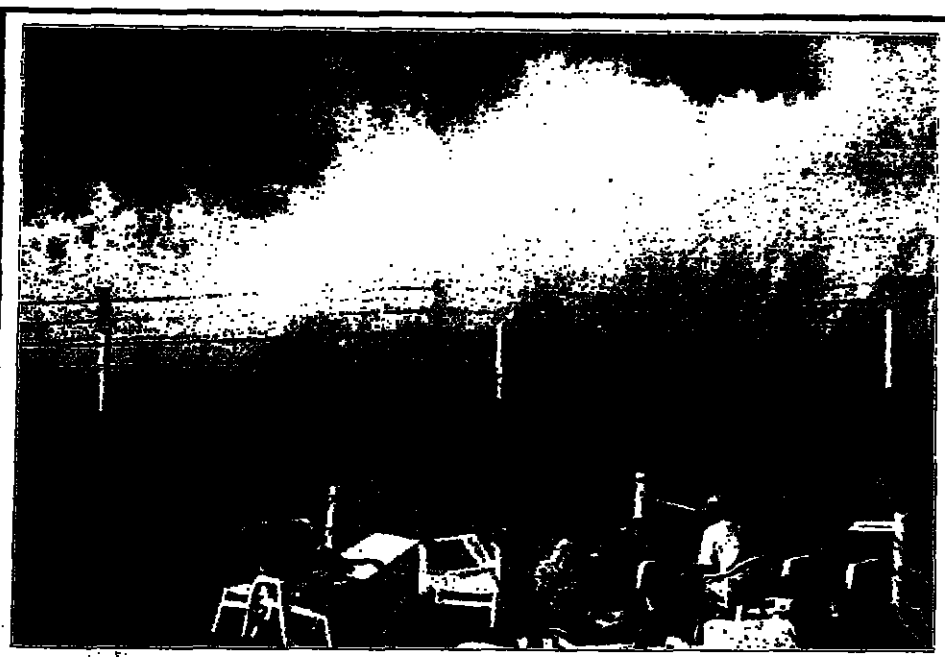
LA Times-Washington Post News Service



"My problem, Doctor, is that everyone is after me."

process and there was no news conference afterward, reflecting their strained relations.

A statement issued later by his office said Mubarak had urged Netanyahu "to deal positively with the US proposal, because it represents the minimum necessary to revive the peace process." Mubarak also said a positive Israeli view of the US plan would put future negotiations on a final settlement between Israel and the Palestinians on



Bathers enjoy the warm spring sunshine in a deserted Casablanca sea resort against the backdrop of crashing Atlantic waves. (Photo by Osama El Sherif)

50 years of injustice

For some, Palestine remains a haunting memory drawn by their father on an old piece of wood

By Raed Al Abed

Star Staff Writer
TODAY MAJID Sabri lights his 22nd candle. Of course a birthday party will be held for him, with all his friends and relatives in attendance. Majid, an only son of a Palestinian fighter who was killed in battle when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, celebrates his birthday on the same day Israeli Jews celebrate the establishment of their state in Palestine.

But no one is toasting at Majid's party. There is just one candle. "We light this candle to renew our determination to return home some day. It is my father's wish."

Majid, a student of computer science at university, said his father left his family with "just a map, drawn on wood, of Palestine from the river to the sea."

Majid's house, like many of the rubble-down homes in refugee camps in Jordan, has a single sentence emblazoned on the inside: "We will return."

Today, as Israelis celebrate the establishment of their state 50 years ago with the aid of the super powers, strife continues to bedevil a region that longs for peace and stability.

The Zinnist movement, the mastermind behind the creation of Israel, succeeded in the

past 50 years in gathering more than four million Jews from all over the world, who now live in Israel at the expense of dispossessing millions of Palestinians of their land and making them refugees.

While Jewish families celebrate their reunion, Um Mahmud, a 70-year-old refugee, has no place to settle in. She has spent the last 25 years of her life traveling from country to country, visiting her sons and daughters. Ironically she said that by now "most of the airports' staffs, especially in Europe and the United States, know me—the same goes for airline stewards."

She has five boys and four girls. Grown now, the youngest is in his early thirties. Um Mahmud's last wish is to see them all in one place.

Like many refugees she has a story to tell. Some of her children have only a Lebanese travel document, given to Palestinian refugees, and this effectively blocks their freedom to travel around the world.

Two of her sons have US citizenship—Tareq, an economics professor at an American university, and Khalid, a civil engineer. A third is a doctor, Ahmed graduated from a school in Malta, and worked

for some time in Libya. He, like many Palestinians, was subsequently forced to leave, so he returned to Malta, the only country that would accept him.

The rest of her children are working in the United Arab Emirates.

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Copex 98 shows military equipment at its best

By Ibtisam Awadat

Star Staff Writer
UNDER THE Patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the 2nd Contingency Operational Procurement Exhibition (Copex 98) opened on Tuesday. Delegations from around the world attending the show expressed their admiration for the progress shown in Jordan's defense industry. The exhibition displayed the latest arsenals in military technology.

"We sent out invitations to almost every country in the world, and about 60 states attended," said Col. Suleiman Mnaizel, spokesman for the exhibition and the head of the Aviation Committee.

Taking part in the exhibition, the second of its kind in Jordan, were defense companies and armed forces representatives from countries that included France, the US, Italy, Denmark, Britain, Romania, Ukraine, Switzerland, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait.

"As the name of the exhibition indicates, the equipment on display is for special forces and special operations duties," Col. Mnaizel said. The three-day exhibition, which ends Thursday, displayed up-to-date defense and military equipment produced by leading world companies. They included "vehicles, light equipments,

shotguns, pistols, laser aiming systems, and many other things," Mnaizel added.

Copex 98 was organized by the Jordanian Armed Forces, which is headed by HRH Prince Abdallah, Commander of Special Operations. The exhibition was convened in cooperation with Copex, a British company that specializes in organizing international military fairs.

The 1996 Copex expo in Amman gained world-wide recognition. The official magazine of the US Department of Commerce gave it wide coverage and considered it a very successful fair, especially because of the breadth of participation and the diversity of military equipment on display.

In that venue only 40 companies participated, and there was no representation from the Jordanian defense industry.

However, "this year there are about 13 Jordanian companies participating, organized in eight different booths," Col. Mnaizel, who underlined the absence of Israeli participation. "We invited everybody. But the reply by Israeli companies was too late. All exhibition booths had already been reserved," Col. Mnaizel said.

This year's show was held at the King Abdullah Air Base. The Royal Jordanian Air Force

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A fertile day for the pitchmen of Old Jerusalem

By Dan Fesperman

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—It is a strike day in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, something to do with the Arab merchants wanting to snub the Jewish mayor, who is bringing through a few European mayors to show them how happy everyone is in his city.

Practically everything on the Arab side of town is closed. At first that seems to be a blessing. A stroll through the Old City can be a gauntlet of tourists and pitchmen. Pale Europeans in sandals and socks hustle past loud Americans aiming video cameras at another spot where Jesus stopped, and getting bumped from behind by sun-visored Japanese gazing at maps.

Insistent Arab boys hawk postcards on the fly. Shopkeepers beckon from doorways: Come buy an olive-wood chess set.

an olive-wood camel, an olive-wood carving of olives. Buy a rug, a pot, a bracelet. Step aside in the nick of time from the path of the speeding cart pushed by a boy half its size.

Yet, when it all disappears you begin to miss the exotic hurly-burly. You want to sniff the wares of the spice merchants, watch the falafel-makers bent over kettles of boiling grease.

and marvel at the scurrying delivery boys who balance trays of tea and coffee as they weave through the crowd.

How pleasant, then, after 15 minutes of empty stone alleys to come upon a few people who have decided to open their shops anyway. One of them, Ibrahim Bader, sits outside his door on the smooth stones of Al Khanka Street. He rises in greeting.

I brace for the inevitable sales pitch. But, no, he says, today is not for selling. Today is for happiness. "This morning," he says, "my wife gave birth to our first child. A son."

My anti-shopkeeper radar lowers its defenses, and I accept an invitation for coffee. Ibrahim sends a boy scotching

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World Report

With 45 years

of construction and progress ever since your Majesty assumed your constitutional powers, Arab Bank wishes you a happy anniversary and a prosperous life.



ARAB BANK

09.1.1998

Copex 98 shows military equipment at its best

Continued from page 1

put on an air show which included a parachute drop. The Royal Falcons presented an exciting aerobatic display, which "added a taste to the expo," commented Col.

Msaizel.

Prince Abdallah's presence was evident on several occasions, in different parts of the show. Prince Raad Ben Zeid, who also attended the venue, expressed his appreciation of the quality of Jordanian mili-

tary products.

"The expo will positively affect the exchange in technology among participants. It is a good occasion for Jordanian and foreign companies to get to know one another," Prince Raad told *The Star*.

Both Arabs and foreigners visited the booths of those companies participating in the event.

Many of the visitors were curious to try the displayed items. "I found the exhibition very interesting and was quite impressed by the advanced level of the Jordanian industry," said Lt. Col. Noel Cheah from the Singapore delegation.

The benefit of organizing such an exhibition is not limited exclusively to military purposes. There are additional advantages for the local economy. For example, some hotels in Amman were fully booked, while Royal Jordanian had the added business of transporting all of the equipment.

"There are two types of military exhibitions: international and local ones. Copex 98 can be classified as a combination of the two," said François Baudouin of the Communications Department in the French GIAT industries.

Baudouin said that he was pleased with the Jordanian presence in the exhibition as well as with the number of foreign participants.

The main purpose of GIAT



Star reporter being shown how to aim

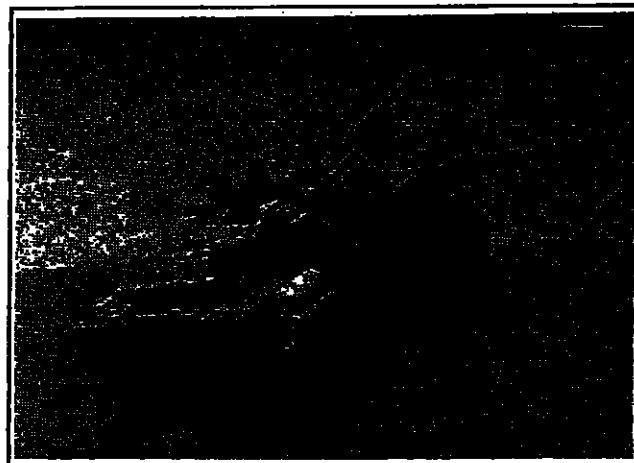


Prince Hassan being shown around, Tuesday

is to provide the French and other friendly armies with land armament systems. The group supplies various equipment to air forces, navies, and police forces. There were six French companies participating, in addition to officials from the French Ministry of Defence.

"We participated in the previous show, but in this year's show I saw more advanced technologies," said Alan Abdo, Middle East regional manager of Harris, an American company.

One of the tanks on show from the UAE



For the Record

King inaugurates economic conference in Denmark

Copenhagen, (Petra)—His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday inaugurated the Jordanian-Danish Economic Relations Conference. His Majesty expressed, in his remarks, his appreciation to the joint Jordanian Danish efforts aimed at enhancing industrial and trade cooperation between both countries, stressing his keenness to develop relations with this friendly country. His Majesty also reviewed the developments in the Middle East, renewing Jordan's commitment to serious action for achieving a comprehensive and just peace in the region.

Mediterranean group hails "pioneering achievement" of Jordanian water plan

Amman, (Petra)—Jordan took part in a conference on water policies in the Mediterranean countries organized in Spain on April 16-18 by the Mediterranean Water Network with the participation of 15 Mediterranean countries and a number of regional and international organizations concerned with water-related issues. Akram Al Jundi from the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, who represented Jordan, gave an account of Jordan's water strategy and water planning based on the strategy. He said the participants were appreciative of Jordan's water plans and, accordingly, the Network requested that the Ministry of Water prepare for a specialized seminar in Amman to discuss the steps taken so far to implement this strategy, which was described by the network as a pioneering achievement in the developing countries.

Regional meeting to deal with bilateral issues of trade, tourism, industry

Amman, (Petra)—A Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli joint meeting will be held during the coming two weeks, according to Israeli Ambassador in Amman, Odid Eran. The meeting will concentrate on means of increasing Jordanian exports to the Palestinian National Authority regardless of the Israeli specifications which limit the flow of goods from Jordanian to Palestinian market.

According to the 1994 Paris agreement, the Palestinians have the right to import goods from Jordan and Egypt out of the frame of Israeli jurisdiction. The Israeli Ambassador said that the rebuilding of King Hussein Bridge, with Japanese support will help in increasing shipments of Jordanian products to Israel. He also stated that he believes that trade and tourism movement between Israel and Jordan would be enhanced.

He added that the Jordanian-Israeli joint committees will meet to activate their work in a way that reflects positively on bilateral relations in the fields of trade, transport, tourism, communications, water and joint industries.

The Ambassador pointed to the joint industries in Al Hasa industrial city, which exports its products directly to American markets and serves the welfare of both countries. The Ambassador expressed hope that the peace march in the Kingdom would be enhanced, hailing the efforts of His Majesty King Hussein to keep the peace process alive.

Opposition parties call for boycott

AMMAN (Star)—Twelve opposition parties have called for a boycott of the Israeli Embassy's celebration of Israel's 50th anniversary next month. The parties said they regard such participation as "treason." The Israeli Embassy in Amman has already issued more than 1,000 invitations to government officials, members of parliament, diplomats, party and tribal leaders, businessmen, and journalists to a reception at the Israeli ambassador's house. Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994, but most professional unions and political groups oppose it.

Car set on fire
AMMAN (Star)—The car of former chief of intelligence Mohammad Al Kilani was set on fire, family members said on Wednesday. They added that they heard an explosion shortly after midnight on Tuesday and found Kilani's Volvo on fire outside their house in Amman's Jebel Weibdeh district. No one was hurt. The incident is still under investigation.

The wonderful world of one dinar shops

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believe, but there you are...

The phenomenon, relatively new in Jordan, is common practice in other countries, both East and West alike. It operates as an alternative avenue for both consumers and distributors, as well as to recycle goods and products that ordinarily would have been thrown away.

Frequented by an increasingly varied clientele, one dinar shops are part of the current economic bullyhoo of the country. An economic upturn or a downturn affects their business accordingly.

Shop owners say that they, like other shops, wait for special calendar days like the Eid festivities, "Mother's Day, Christmas or even the start of

school. During such times their daily sales sky-rocket. One shopkeeper happily admitted that on some days during these occasions he takes in upwards of JD 100. However, average daily sales in the Amman shops is usually no more than JD 25 according to some "bargain hunters."

But even this is considered to be good business. A few shop owners in Zerga complain that on some days that they don't even sell JD 5 worth of goods, and that they'd be laughing with joy if they averaged JD 25 per day. One merchant said that taking in JD 25 was possible, but in truth was the case only on special occasions. Another bitterly complained that he had to close his shop because business never really got off the ground.

So far, however, shop closures remain isolated incidents, and customers still seem to be buying. As with everything, some shops are more popular than others. How different shops slowly build up their own clientele despite the fact that they sell more or less the same things remains something of a mystery. You'd think it would depend on the shops' proximity to their customers or the variety and quality of what they sell. Price, naturally, isn't a consideration. The differences may be too subtle to define. However, preferences aside, it is safe to say that the shops are a boon for ordinary shoppers and style-seekers alike. As long as one dinar notes, coupled with a desire for bargains, remain in circulation, they aren't likely to go away.

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Emirates. Um Mahmoud, who holds a travel document and a US green card, has to apply one month in advance for a visa to visit her married daughters in Jordan, Libya and the United Arab Emirates.

The case of Um Mahmoud could be applied to all of the Palestinian refugees who still dream about their lost country. Many of them believe that the creation of Israel was a result of a conspiracy.

Between April 9 and 10 1948, only 20 days before the announcement of the creation of Israel, about 4,000 Jewish terrorists descended on a rural village just outside of Jerusalem and butchered more than 100 of its people.

The massacre at Dir Yassin became a symbol of Zionist terrorism. In the so-called "Operation Unity," the Hagana, the Irgun and the Stern Gang surrounded the village which was overlooked by two Jewish settlements, Givat Shaul and Montefiore. The time was 4:30 am, Friday 9 April 1948.

"For two days Jewish terrorists slaughtered men, women and children, and stole their jewelry," said Dr Zuhdi Sanur who grew up in Dir Yassin.

Zuhdi, age 15 at the time says "I managed to escape through a back window and run away to the hills." He added that there were only 50 fighters defending the village, and they had only simple weapons. However they did manage to hold their guard for 12 hours against the 4,000 Jewish attackers.

A chilling account of the massacre is given by a Red Cross doctor who arrived at the village on the second day and saw for himself "the mopping up" as one of the terrorists put it to him. The doctor says that "the mopping up" had been done with machine guns, then grenades and had been finished off with knives.

Women's bellies were cut open and babies were butchered in the hands of their helpless mothers. According to the Red Cross about 250 people were murdered in cold blood. Of them, 25 pregnant women were bayoneted in the abdomen while still alive. 57 children were maimed under the eyes of their own mothers, who then were slain and their heads cut off.

The Jewish Agency and the commander of the British ground troops knew of the massacre while it was going on, however, no one intervened to stop it.

After this, the message was clear. In the mayhem, Menachem



On the move, 1948: Palestinians, uprooted from their homes, set out on the long journey to life as refugees. (UN photo)

Begin, leader of the Irgun gang, effectively conveyed to the Palestinian Arabs that they must flee the advancing Jewish armies or face dire consequences. Within weeks of the massacre over 300,000 Arabs fled their homes. As Begin noted in his memoirs, the "legend" of Dir Yassin was "worth half a dozen battalions to the forces of Israel."

After the massacre, Begin, who later became a prime minister of Israel, sent a message of congratulations to the conquerors of Dir Yassin, saying, "accept congratulations on this splendid act of conquest. Tell the soldiers who have made history in Israel."

But Dir Yassin was not an isolated incident. Slaughter seems to have been a running theme. Before Dir Yassin, Jewish gangs carried out four other massacres—at Yehida, Kibbas, Qazaza, and Al Sheikh Village. One week after Dir Yassin, they attacked Nasir Al Din village killing a number of civilians. The killing continued at Beit Darus, and at what became known as the Dahmash Mosque Massacre. After that it was Dawayma, Sharafat, Kibya, the infamous Kafr Qasem, and at Al Samouh.

Since then, Israel has had its hand in the killings in Subri, and Shatila in 1982, the Aynun Qara Massacre, Al Aqsa Mosque, Ibrahim

Mosque, the the Jabalia Mosque, and finally one at the Erez Checkpoint.

Since the beginning of the Intifada, Israel has tried to crush the Palestinian revolt against the occupation. According to the Database Project on Palestinian Human Rights, from December 9, 1987 till late 1993 more than 1,200 Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers and extremist settlers. A large number of the victims of Israel violence have been children.

These massacres still ring in the minds of many Palestinians. And some Israelis who led the killing in the early days are still alive.

Ex-Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was the operation commander of Lehi, a terrorist organization involved in the slaughter of nearly 100 Palestinians in Duwayma. Yitzhak Rabin, another future prime minister, was responsible for the expulsion of 50,000 Palestinians from the towns of Lydda and Ramleh.

As a result of violence, threats and psychological warfare, approximately 770,000 Palestinians were displaced in 1948. For Zionist settlers in Palestine, this proved to be, in the words of the first President of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, a "miraculous clearing of the land."

"I do not trust Israeli Jews. Considering the heinous way

they killed my countrymen and occupied our homeland, I can never trust them," said Mr Arafat Hijazi, a journalist and an author of some 30 books on the subject. "When the Jews came to Palestine they appeared to be very poor, and even my father used to give money to them, just as he did to poor Palestinians."

Hijazi was born in Hebron in 1927 and studied in Al Rashedyia School in Jerusalem. He has been a journalist since 1948. He began writing at that time for Palestine Newspaper, published in Jerusalem.

Hijazi believes that "despite the peace agreement between Israeli and the Palestinians, I can, to this day, use the same words to describe the situation that I used 50 years ago, because nothing has changed concerning the Palestinian tragedy, except that the Arabs are becoming weaker."

The long history of Palestinian suffering and Israeli intransigence demonstrates the urgent need for international involvement in bringing peace to the Holy Land. Israel's occupation and violations of human rights demand the exertion of international political and economic pressure to stop the oppression of the Palestinians.

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JORDAN

An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar



King Hussein and Queen Noor visit their daughter Haya in the stables of Paul Schockemuehle in northern Germany, Sunday.

Channel 3
Jordan is to have a 3rd Channel according to Nasser Joudeh, the director-general of the Radio and Television Corp. The channel, due to start in May, will broadcast cultural and sports programs. Later on, air time will be devoted to parliamentary debates. Joudeh said Channel 3 will initially cover only the Greater Amman area, and the higher areas of Salt, Zerga, Irbid and Ajlun. Eventually, however, it will reach to the rest of the Kingdom. With the modernization of its transmitting equipment, Channel 1 of Jordan Television can be seen as far as Al Arish in Sinai, Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. He added that more than a million extra viewers can now see Jordan television, which this week celebrates its 30th anniversary.

One man, one vote
The Student Council of the University of Jordan is still up in arms about the recent decision by the administration to unilaterally introduce the one man, one vote system. The new Council, which was recently elected on this system, wants the University to hold a referendum on the one man, one vote system. Students also say they want immunity from the University questioning them for actions they consider within their rights.

Solidarity with Iraq
More than 150 political activists are travelling to Baghdad, today, Thursday, to attend the 5th Popular Arab Forces conference. The event is being held between 2-4 May. Local participants include Salim Al Nahas, Muhammad Al Zoubi, Saeed Thiyab, Tayyar Himsi and Ahmad Al Najdawi. The first conference was held in Amman, and later was moved to Baghdad.

Unemployment discussed
A conference to discuss unemployment will be held in Amman this coming August. The event, which is being organized by the Ministry of Administrative Development, will be under Royal patronage. Minister of Administrative Development Bassam Unruh said that the purpose of the conference is to discuss the unemployment problem which is increasing especially among the youth.

Jordanian communists
The Jordanian communists are in trouble. This is what we have been hearing for the last couple of weeks. Not only that, there has also been a certain amount of mudslinging among the cadres and between members of the leadership. The tension is apparently still brewing—otherwise, why would a third party try and intervene to solve the differences? According to Al Majid, the Arab Baath Progressive Party (ABPP), is trying to head the rift within the Jordanian Communist Party. Head of the ABPP, Mahmood Al Ma'itah, is already in the midst of heated negotiations. The trouble can be traced back to the end of last year when Yacoub Zayadeen was replaced by Munir Hamarneh as Secretary General of the Party. While it was labelled then as a white coup d'état, it was only just the beginning. The problem was magnified when accusations started flying that there was alleged forgery in the last election to the JCP Central Committee, and the receiving of funds from outside. Old time communists say that what is hurting the party even more is that the 'problems' have been taken out of the party context, and played out in the press. Zayadeen says that what is needed is another party conference to settle the issues once and for all.

How can doctors improve their lot? Public health doctors look to private sector

By Ibtisam Awadati
Star Staff Writer

DESPITE ITS flexibility, the medical profession in Jordan faces tough times in the future if the tide of doctors moving to the private sector is not stemmed. Experts believe that if this "emigration" is not stopped it could lead to a decrease in the quality of public health service.

Motives for the movement from the public to the private sector varies from case to case, but "the lack of financial privileges that guarantee a reasonable standard of living is the first obstacle. Since salaries are very low when compared with the high standard of living," said Dr Bassem Al Keswani, the committee's rapporteur of the Ministry of Health in the council of the Doctor's Association (DA).

Keswani pointed out that since the 1970s, wages have been outstripped by the increase in prices over the same period.

The second reason for the movement is that we do not have a definite training program which fulfills the academic ambition of doctors," Keswani said. However, medical services, especially in the military, clearly outline a system of training courses and scholarships, and this provides a good opportunity for a doctor to improve his skills, Keswani went on to say.

There are 12,000 doctors registered in the Doctor's Association. Of these 3,000 work in the Ministry of Health and the Royal Medical Services, leaving the rest to find their way in the private sector.

But there is more than

meets the eye. A few months ago those working in the public sector went on strike, demanding that the government increase salaries to match the rising cost of living. "Our decision to suspend working in hospitals and medical centers have no political purpose. We were forced to take such actions to attract the attention of the government to the miserable situation in the profession," Keswani explained.

The doctors' demands are still being studied by the courts. They are asking for an improved incentive system. "We can't comment on this issue now because we have taken the case to court, and are still awaiting the verdict," Keswani said.

But not all agree that the situation is worsening.

"We can't consider it [doctors going to the private sector] as a phenomenon," it's nothing more than waves, which, incidentally, are on the decrease these days," said Dr Awni Hawamdeh, president of the General Practitioner Society (GPS), one of the largest societies in Jordan, comprising 6,000 general practitioners from the public and private sectors.

"Many doctors would prefer working in centers and hospitals run by the Ministry of Health if they had a choice—many of the private

clinics can only be considered as camouflaged unemployment," Hawamdeh continued. "Medical equipment in private clinics costs enormous sums, and are considered risky to invest in. But well-known doctors have no fears in such expensive outlays," he said.

Hawamdeh is optimistic about the development of government services provided to patients—the modern equipments in these hospitals and the high number of patients who go there positively affect the experience of the doctor.

"The main goal behind the GPS is to organize the work of the doctor and improve his scientific level so that he can give his best to the needy," emphasized Hawamdeh.

"...But the psychological dimension is extremely important," adds Dr Ismael Marwaj, a well-known physician and former president of the Doctor's Association.

"After a time, and as a doctor gains experience, staying on as an employee is no longer an attractive idea as he looks to becoming his own master," Marwaj continued.

"But we should remember that a specialist in the University of Jordan Hospital, for instance, is privy to the latest techniques and developments—more so than if he is working outside [private]. In an interesting analogy, Marwaj compares working in the private sector with a marriage that produces no children.

"In the public sector, we have students to train who consider our sons and feel proud of when they succeed; this interaction between doc-

tors doesn't exist in the private sector," Marwaj said.

In the end, realizing that there is some dissatisfaction among doctors working in the public sector, the government partially acted by "allowing doctors in some public hospitals to work in private clinics—like what happened in the University of Jordan Hospital (UJH)," Marwaj said.

However, the general rule is that doctors in the public health sector are not allowed to work in the private sector, something which they consider unjust.

"The UJH experiment is a multi-purpose attempt to raise the income of doctors and decrease the pressure on the government. At the same time, patients who do not want to wait can immediately find the kind of treatment they want," Marwaj concluded.

However, Keswani suggested that there is more than one way to get out of this dilemma.

"The government has to increase the salaries of doctors or follow the piecemeal system (ie., work per hour), which means that doctors become more than just employees."

Another solution affecting doctors concerns companies who have medical insurance funds and limit the number of doctors they deal with. According to Keswani, they should leave the choice to their employees so that more doctors get the benefit.

A specialist, Keswani said that in 1977 his average monthly salary was JD 487, equivalent to about \$1,500 at that time—enough so that doctors could save a portion of their earnings to continue their studies or even to get married. "In 1998, there are only marginal differences as far as salary—which is a little more than JD 500 per month—is concerned, and this clearly can't provide the basic needs of the doctor or his family," Keswani maintained.

King Hussein confers with Arafat, Peres, calls for continuing resolve toward "a just and lasting peace"

Baden-Baden, (Petra)—His Majesty King Hussein conferred Friday night with President of the Palestinian National Authority Yasser Arafat, in the presence of Israeli ex-prime minister Shimon Peres, on issues relating to obstacles facing the peace process.

The three sides declared their backing of the American proposals, some of whose contents have been reported in the media, that aim at activating peace negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Arafat and Peres were on a visit to Germany to attend the ceremony in which His Majesty the King was presented with the 1997 German Media Award for his dedication and commitment to peace, which he received last week.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Abdel Salam Majali, Chief of the Hashemite Royal Court Faysal Tarawneh, Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani and the Jordanian Ambassador to Germany. It was attended on the Palestinian side by Palestinian Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat and the Palestinian Ambassador to Germany.

After the meeting, King Hussein told a Jordanian media delegation accompanying him that "it is the role of all peace makers to join forces and work to defend the right of future generations in the region to live safely and be secure by achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace."

King Hussein warned that "this stage is critical and sensitive, other things go back to the right track or those who are responsible for the stalemate should bear their responsibility over the results of this stalemate."

His Majesty reiterated his stand that the United States is a partner in the peace process and as such, it should give something.

"Rejecting this partner's intervention is not reasonable," he said. The King confirmed that things are going according to a certain scheme that "I know of for some time now and that the US is determined to have an active and effective role in the peace process."

His Majesty King Hussein stressed the importance of the European role in the Middle East as these two regions are neighbors with common interests. Europe should have a complementary role to that of the US, so that all parties can serve and defend peace.

However, the King added that it is premature to comment on the London meeting between Palestinian and Israeli officials.

Prime Minister Abdel Salam Majali expressed pride on His Majesty's receiving the German Media Award, since this is a demonstration of Germany's and Europe's great appreciation of King Hussein's wise and courageous leadership, humanitarian stands and role in serving the peace process.

Dr Majali told reporters that he hopes international and European backing of the peace process would pressure the Israeli side to change its policies of putting obstacles in the way of peace.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said His Majesty King Hussein deserves the German Media Award since he is a real peace maker who shows patience, courage and determination to make peace and safeguard it, despite the hardships and obstacles.

Peres described His Majesty's address at the ceremony as important. "He spoke on behalf of us all," he added.

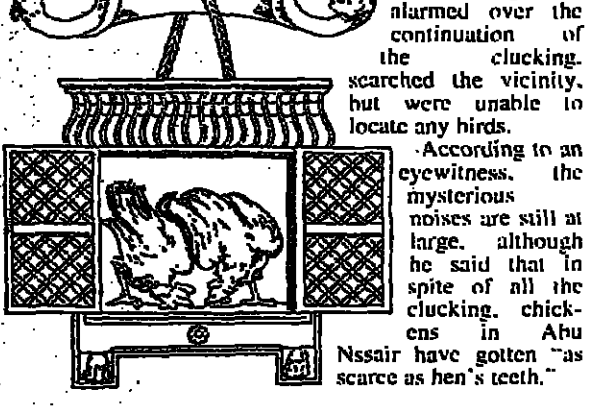
Peres said the peace process is going through a critical stage. But "I don't think the chance for peace is lost since we do not hear voices that call for war. This is a tangible change forward," he added.

Former Labour Party leader Peter Mandelson reported that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "himself has no other choice but peace." The main problem facing Netanyahu, he said, is that he focuses on achieving the wishes of his coalition. "He has to take some risks," Peres added, "because there is no peace without risks. He has to take risks for peace instead of risks for war."

Where do chickens' clucks come from?

Something very funny happened the other day in Abu Nssair. One resident had two chickens which kept clucking. Obviously, it didn't take long for this to become very irritating to the neighbors. After much pleading with the man, they called in the authorities, who in turn took the chickens away for disturbing the peace.

Feeling angry, the man determined that he would have the last laugh! He managed to make a recording of chicken noises, and every night he played the recording as loud as possible.



The neighbors, alarmed over the continuation of the clucking, searched the vicinity, but were unable to locate any birds. According to an eyewitness, the mysterious noises are still at large, although he said that in spite of all the clucking, chickens in Abu Nssair have gotten "as scarce as hen's teeth."

A fertile day for pitchmen

Continued from page 1

around the corner, who returns in a flash with two steaming cups of Turkish coffee on a brass tray. We seat ourselves on cushioned benches in the back of the shop. Ibrahim begins showing me his merchandise, while insisting again that this is not a day for selling.

"This is lapis," he says. "You are married?"

"Yes." My wife is from South Africa, she is English. We have been married 14 years. Before now, seven miscarriages. It was a difficult pregnancy—flat on her back for the last four days. Does your wife like lapis? Here, take some of this homemade pastry. See these pictures on the wall? This is my wife and I, scuba diving last year.

The blonde in the photo looks a bit young for a wife of 14 years, who has had seven miscarriages. But Ibrahim has moved on, pointing now at a display case.

"Your wife, she likes this kind of stone?" He pulls the lid from a yogurt drink and proffers it. "Please, To drink with your pastry."

I mumble a thank-you. "I have relatives in Fairfax, Virginia. You know this place?"

"It's not far from my home, in Baltimore."

"I have been in Baltimore, to the, what do you call it, the harbor. We went out in a—what do you call it?" He makes a pedaling motion with his hands. "A paddle boat?"

"Yes. A paddle boat. Would your wife like this kind of jewelry, do you think?" He has moved behind his glass-top counter, and gestures to a few rows of earrings.

The anti-shopkeeper radar is on red-alert. It is clearly time to leave, but under the local rules of engagement his generosity obligates me to another five minutes. I gaze dutifully at a few items, ask for his business card, then make up something about an appointment with a friend. I promise to return later in the week.

Free again to wander, I turn the corner down another narrow, shaded street, but only 100 yards past before another shopkeeper shouts at me in English.

"You are staying at the American Colony Hotel, yes?"

"Well, yes."

"I saw you there the other night," he says. "It is practically like my home. My family once owned it. We are Bedouins."

Knowing something about the history of the hotel, I seriously doubt this, but who knows?

"You will have tea with me," he announces. "In my shop."

"Well, I'm supposed to meet a friend."

"Yes, but this is a special day. I have very big news. My brother-in-law, just yesterday he becomes a father for the first time."

I had never realized Jerusalem was such a fertile place. I stepped inside his jewelry shop.

He showed me her picture. "Left, unspoken is that this would seem to rule out him, Mohammed Salih, as the woman's brother."

Mohammed attempts to rally, spinning a yarn about his delusional brother-in-law: Long ago Ibrahim dated a South African woman, and he still pines for her, sometimes even telling strangers that she is his wife. Which is hard for Mohammed's sister.

Seeming to realize how feeble this sounds, Mohammed sags in his chair.

"Look," he says finally. "Ibrahim, he is big bastard. Me, I am bigger one. There is no baby. I am not Bedouin. I am Palestinian. My family never owned the hotel. We say these things to make people come into our stores."

So begins a salesman's confession. As Mohammed pours tea he warms to the task, speaking with devilish glee of the tricks of his trade. He describes a favorite approach with English-speaking couples: "Please, can you help me?" he will beckon. "I speak English but I cannot write it. Can you help me write a sign for my shop?"

They oblige, of course, writing out "Big Sale Today" on a piece of cardboard. Then he expresses his gratitude by inviting them for coffee, which they cannot refuse without insulting him, and by the time they're finished they feel obligated to shop, or even buy.

Single women? "Best customers of all," Mohammed says. Especially Americans. Tell them any sob story—dead uncle, impending bankruptcy, you name it—and they fall for it. Flirt a while and the results

are even better. And he really had seen me at the hotel. Having a knack for remembering faces, he makes the rounds of the local hotel bars and restaurants, then scans for familiar faces the next day, looking for any entry point to begin spinning his tales.

What about the haggling? Nothing in these shops ever has a marked price, so how does he decide what the market will bear? With Germans or Swiss, he starts high. Sometimes they'll pay exactly what he asks, even if it's three times what he's willing to accept.

The toughest bargainers? "The English," he says. "Or more so, Swissmen."

"What about that line you always hear in shops in the morning?" I ask. "The one about 'First customer of the day always gets a special deal.'"

"Too old," he says dismissively. "Everyone uses that now."

The wealth of candor is disarming, in the point that for a moment I consider buying something. Then I suspect that perhaps this, too, is a sort of sales pitch.

"Hey, Ibrahim," I imagine him bragging later. "I tried the 'come clean' approach and he bought it. And he still thinks you're my brother-in-law."

So, I again mention my appointment with a friend—my own little bit of deceit—and ease out the door. For blocks I stroll past further shops with the smug pleasure of the insider, until one merchant recognizes me for the easy mark I have always been.

"Hey, Mister American, how are you today? You come and drink tea?"

"Sorry. Not today."

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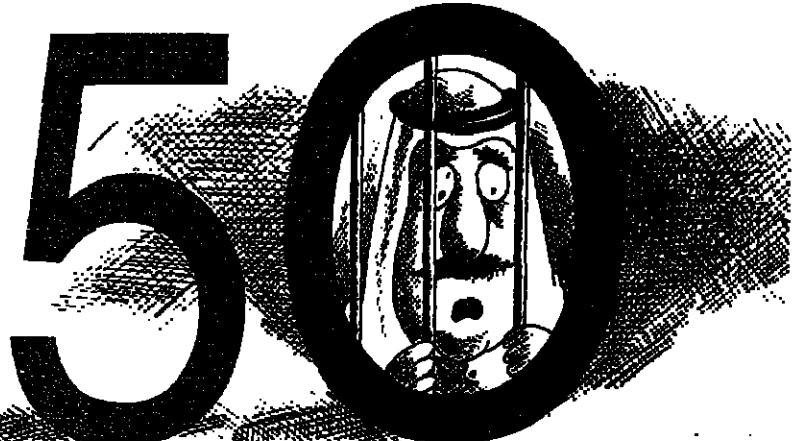
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Our Say...

No reason to celebrate

AS ISRAEL marks 50 years of existence, the prospects of a just and comprehensive peace in the holy land is as elusive as it was on that fateful day half a century ago. And 50 years on, the Jewish state, carved out of Arab Palestine with the aid of the British occupying power at the time, remains both a menace to its neighbors and an oppressor of the Palestinian people.

The celebrations marking Israel's birthday will be marred by the fact that while the oppressed Jews of the world had finally found a home in the Middle East, it was not without a great injustice to the Palestinians who lost theirs. The birth of the Jewish nation cannot be separated from the destruction of another. This great injustice will always haunt the creators and leaders of Israel.

The anniversary is another reminder that while the Jews, oppressed and pulverized by European nations until the middle of this century, were finally aided in their search for a homeland by the most powerful countries in the world, the feeling of guilt cannot be washed away so long as the Palestinians continue to struggle for justice and their own homeland.

Israel today is somehow different from the state championed by Ben Gurion in 1948. It is not a victim but rather the victimizer, occupying Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian territories in stark defiance of UN laws and resolutions. In fact, in view of its continuous violations of international conventions, Israel has become a rogue state that is not obliged to honor the laws of the very same organization that created it.

With blind US support, Israel has become a state above the law. As a result it has built a huge nuclear arsenal, confiscated land, prevented refugees from returning to their homes, annexed territory and carries out deadly missions in foreign capitals—all with impunity.

Israel is also a divided country, with religious fanatics and political zealots taking over and dictating their will. The result is a regional power that is slowly succumbing to the dictates of extremist parties.

With the last chance of a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict slipping away, Israel is driving the region towards a bloody confrontation. Israel's benefactors and supporters should do well to remember that appeasement will not prevent a catastrophe from taking place in the Middle East.

Change and justice are long overdue. The Jews should be the first to look objectively at their own history. They cannot overlook the fact that no genuine celebration can ever take place while more than five million Palestinians remain stateless and oppressed. The real celebration can take place only when the holy land becomes home of two states: one Jewish, one Palestinian. Israel's 50th anniversary is not a cause for celebration, but a reminder of the shame that will always haunt the international community for failing to do justice to the Palestinians on whose land the Jews have erected their home.



Faisal Hussein, who is responsible for the Jerusalem portfolio in the PNA, receives a group of friends of the late Abdel Qader Al Hussein who was killed during the Battle of Qastel in 1948 Palestine, Sunday.

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Arab dispossession ignored as Israel celebrates 50th Palestinians final victims of European holocaust

By Robert Fisk

AT THE end of Steven Spielberg's awesome 'Schindler's List', cinema-goers see the Holocaust survivors in present-day Israel. Out of the wickedness of Hitler's Europe has come, for this pitiful few, a happy ending.

Only it wasn't the end of the story. For as Hitler's victims arrived in Palestine to fight against the Arabs for a new state called Israel, the Jews of Palestine displaced 750,000 Palestinian Arabs, driving them from their homes and property, slaughtering hundreds in a village called Deir Yassin, whose name has been erased by Israeli authorities.

It is a fair bet that Spielberg will not be making a film about these Palestinians and their tragedy. Nor will Israel be reminding the world of their plight as it celebrates its 50 years of statehood. Instead, we will hear of Israel's struggle to survive decades of Arab hatred and assault, of its battle against Islamic terrorism, which includes any Arab who fights against occupation. And all this as its prime minister steadily and deliberately dismantles the peace process supposed to end what Yitzhak Rabin called "a hundred years of blood."

The birth of Israel was supported by millions of Europeans and Americans who felt a personal sense of guilt over the destruction of European Jewry. As millions of refugees trekked across the broken lands of postwar Europe, the dispossession of 750,000 Arabs was not going to bother the world's conscience.

And in a world that had experienced mass insanity, there was something deeply inspiring in the image of a risen people creating a new land, a people, moreover, who espoused the ideals of democracy, liberalism and Western culture.

This is what the world will be asked to celebrate this year: the Israel that is a democracy. Forgotten will be the Palestinians and the 50th anniversary of what they call their Catastrophe. They should have accepted the UN partition of Palestine, the Israelis say.

True, agree many Arabs today. They fled because they were with good reason terrified for their lives. And they remain today a total—with their children and grandchildren—of well over 3 million, a permanent reminder that Israel was built not just on the dreams of Zionism and the Balfour declaration and the sympathy of the West for the victims of Hitler's evil, but on the lands of

dispossessed Palestinian Arabs.

It was this dispossession which led, ultimately, to the subsequent wars. In 1948, Israel took more than its share of Palestine. In 1967 the Israelis took the West Bank and Gaza, the Golan Heights and the Sinai. In 1973 they lost and retook part of the Sinai, did the same in the Golan, held the West Bank and, within five years, moved into 10 percent of Lebanon as well.

In the West and with the help of Israel's friends, Arabs were meanwhile vilified as uncivilized, undemocratic and anti-Western, cartooned as hoodlums, greedy and debauched much as the Nazi had portrayed the innocent Jews of Europe in the 1930s.

Another historic turning point that will not be mentioned in this year's celebrations will be Israel's defeat in the 1982-85 Lebanon war, which gave inspiration to the Palestinian intifada uprising which ultimately propelled Rabin and Shimon Peres towards a peace agreement whose details are currently hanging in the balance.

And all the while, Israel, with help from abroad—its immensely powerful lobby in the United States, an annual gift of \$1.3 billion from American taxpayers and the obedience of

journalists too frightened to criticize Israel for fear of being accused of anti-Semitism—maintained the moral high ground as well as military strength. It is this very power, thought of as singleness of mind and unity of purpose, which Israelis will be hoping to celebrate this year.

Yet the sickness of Israel remains expansion, the desire to enlarge the Israeli state at the expense of its neighbors. David Ben-Gurion himself maintained in 1948 that his new state had only been founded in a portion of the state of Israel.

The 1967 victory allowed Israel to build Jewish settlements across the West Bank and Gaza. Now Prime Minister Netanyahu, far from withdrawing, is building still more on Arab land. The expansion of Jewish settlements and Israeli recalcitrance in returning Palestinian land has stalled peace talks for a year, but Netanyahu seems unwilling to compromise.

And so, to the despair of Israel's friends and the delight of its enemies, the Israeli prime minister seems set on leading the country into war on the 50th anniversary of its birth.

This article, originally appearing in *MER*, has been edited for brevity.

Jerusalem history "severely altered" by Zionist claims Fiction of 'unified' holy city a result of Israeli domination

City of Stone: The Hidden History of Jerusalem, by Mervin Benvenisti, University of California Press

Reviewed by Naida Rifaat

Jerusalem is a city that enjoys a uniqueness not shared by any other city in the world. It is not merely a holy city built of stone, sacred to the three major monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism, but it is a city that for over the past 100 years has been the center of a deadly struggle between its native Palestinian population on the one hand and Zionist colonial settlers on the other, both who claim sovereignty and control over the city (as well as over the entirety of Palestine).

In *City of Stone*, Mervin Benvenisti, an Israeli citizen and former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, describes with depth, vividness and compassion the historical roots of this struggle and its many-sided religious, national and international aspects, as well as pondering the possibilities for a future settlement that satisfies the mutual interests of all its residents.

Although Benvenisti does not deny the legitimacy of Zionist settlements in Jerusalem nor the deep historical and religious bond that ties Jews to Jerusalem and to their most sacred site of all, the Temple Mount, he nevertheless recognizes, unlike the prevailing Israeli position, the Palestinians as constituting a national collective with historical roots and legitimate rights in Jerusalem.

Moreover, although he may disagree with some of the Palestinian interpretation of Jerusalem's ancient and more recent history, including some of the events during the Mandatory period, he nonetheless reveals how Israel herself has manipulated historical facts in order to justify Zionist claims and foster Israeli legitimacy. Thus the Israeli version of Jerusalem's history marginalizes the non-Jewish presence in the city, meaning that thousands of years of the city's history are disregarded.

In addition the bloody communal warfare between Jews and Palestinians during the Mandatory period is marginalized and the killing and expulsion of Palestinian civilians and the looting of their property that accompanied it has been obliterated from Israeli national consciousness in an effort to forget this embarrassing chapter.

Benvenisti also describes how, following the Israeli occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem after the 1967 war, Israel adopted a multi-pronged policy aimed at ensuring Israeli rule over the newly "unified city" and its self-proclaimed capital. This has involved expanding and constantly manipulating Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, expropriating Palestinian land, intensifying Jewish settlement and adopting discriminatory measures against the Palestinian population.

These measures have aimed at creating physical and demographic *fait accompli* that will make any future re-division of the city impossible. They have entailed "creating a demographic balance in favour of the Jewish presence in the city while preventing the growth of the Arab population or the expansion of its living space. They have also allowed the annexation of further West Bank territory by including it within Jerusalem's boundaries.

Moreover they have involved the imposition of an inferior social and economic status on the Arab community resulting in spatial segregation and extreme ethnic and socioeconomic polarization which has meant, as Benvenisti points out, that characterizing Jerusalem as a "unified city" is in itself a political, economic and social fiction, valid only for sloganeering purposes.

Benvenisti describes how the quasi-military style of creating "irreversible" facts on the ground in order to ensure Israeli domination over the "unified city" has greatly changed Jerusalem's traditional visual texture and severely altered its historical character and aesthetic value which had been preserved until 1967.

He also points out how the policy of land expropriation and intensive Jewish settlement as well as that of polarization and discrimination contributed to the Palestinian uprising or Intifada (1987-1993). In his opinion the Intifada and the strong desire for separation constituted the motivating force behind the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the consequent signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles in 1993. Although the discussion of Jerusalem was removed from the context of the interim agreement and relegated to the final status negotiations, Benvenisti nevertheless sees that the Declaration of Principles embodied Israel's recognition of the Palestinian collective and thus imparted legitimacy to this national collective in Jerusalem.

However Benvenisti also points out that Israel has always considered leaving Jerusalem for last to be an extremely important tactical objective, since postponement of the debate would enable Israel to continue establishing irreversible facts in the city, thereby reinforcing its status.

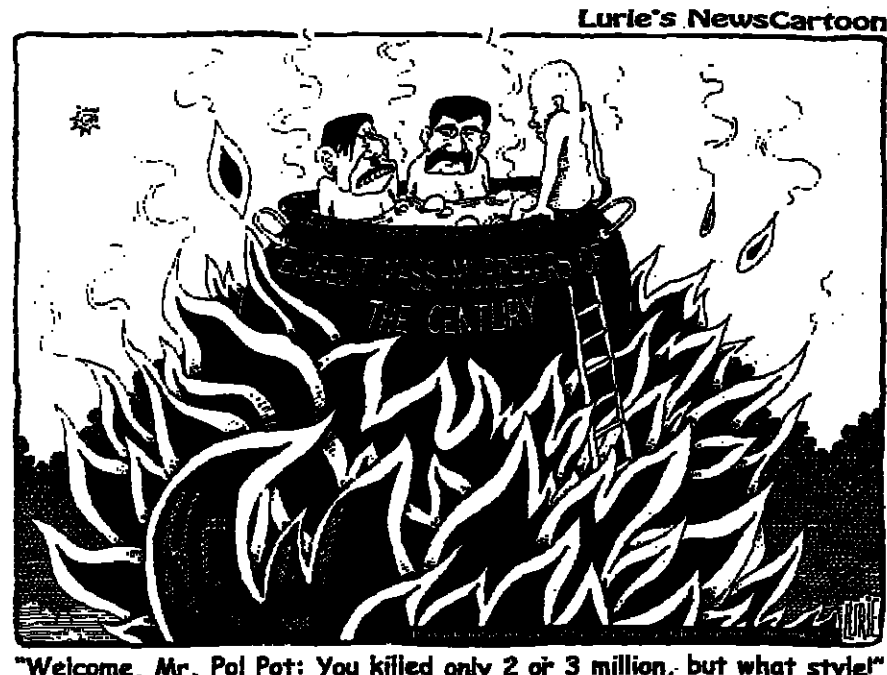
Benvenisti sees that the "Jerusalem problem" is a highly complex one, an enigma that still awaits to be unraveled. He surveys the many proposals and plans that have been put forward for its solution since the start of the century, which include issues such as sovereignty, the holy places and municipal administration, none of which have been implemented except for those imposed by force of arms. In Benvenisti's opinion the conflict over Jerusalem is not simply an ethnic, municipal dispute with an interreligious flavor, but a dispute between two national communities seeking to control the country and the city that they share. It is a conflict that is not so much a "problem" as it is a "condition"

that pervades every level of private and collective life and where competing aspirations for self-determination, independence and sovereignty are at stake.

For an ethno-national conflict such as this, a "solution-oriented" approach may not be as applicable as a "process-oriented" approach, which requires a constant effort to grapple with the exigencies of a changing reality, with no shortcuts via once-and-for-all solutions. In this dynamic approach progress is measured not in terms of approaching some predetermined objective, but by the mere fact of agreement, even on the pettiest of issues.

Benvenisti sees that the so-called Oslo process embodies such an approach, and could eventually achieve an arrangement that one may rightly call "the final settlement."

However he sees that the major threat to this process-oriented approach is the rise to power of the Israeli Right headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed to "ensure that Jerusalem is not negotiable." Despite this, however, Benvenisti points out that although the Israelis enjoy a clear advantage over the Palestinians, having all the force of a sovereign state at their disposal, they nevertheless have been repeatedly made to realize their limitations: no form of coercion that they have applied has been capable of suppressing the Palestinians' collective attachment to Jerusalem and its concrete manifestations, thus the struggle for Jerusalem has not been decided and its enigma still remains...



"Welcome, Mr. Pol Pot: You killed only 2 or 3 million, but what style!"

Middle East East by East

by Khairi Jabek

Added time!

THE TALKS that are to take place soon in London between President Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu are reminiscent of a soccer match in which two important teams are playing out the last moments at injury time. Injury time in this case is an apt analogy for the situation, as there isn't even a grace period to lick the wounds.

One hopes that the reality is different, and that all the statements made regarding this round, being the make-or-break round, are all hyperbole. The optimism expressed regarding the possibilities of a major breakthrough in the deadlocked Palestinian-Israeli track are clearly a matter of setting a positive tone prior to the meeting.

Perhaps it would have been advisable to lower the tone to at least deflect unnecessary presuppositions, and avoid putting the whole meeting under the cloud of an almost threatening hope. The current aura of optimism may backfire if the meeting fails, for as things stand now many people are wary of pronouncements revolving around the understanding of hopeful attitudes that have risen recently with respect to the new meeting.

Clearly, not only in our region, but also in the international community, all eyes will be set on London in the hope for some kind of a commitment to push forward the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations.

The success of British Prime Minister Blair in wearing his two hats—the British hat and the EU hat—has provided some comfort to the US-led efforts to promote peace in the region, yet even his diplomacy will attract the same flack if the EU's role does not qualitatively keep on par with the immense responsibilities of solving the complex issues related to the most volatile region in the world.

If the Palestinian-Israeli peace track represents an international burden, then one is entitled to wonder why the EU does not share the political burdens (already, it is assuming the financial burdens) with the US, at least from the perspective of the old saying, "a problem shared is a problem halved."

Netanyahu has emphatically stated his objections to an expanded EU role, and despite his good relations with Blair, he does not hide his opinions to the effect the EU does not understand the complex issues of the Middle East, though he himself has more often been accused of exactly this. Nevertheless, it is itself did not deter him from carrying out his tasks as Israel's prime minister, as well as its central negotiator with the EU.

The clear objective of the frequent visits of American and EU envoys to the region is to promote and to help materialize regional peace. In this light, it seems that any party that has credibility and is willing to participate in the process ought to be given the chance to do so. It is essential to remind ourselves that the question of peace in the region cannot depend on Netanyahu's sensitivities, on Arafat's opinions, nor on American good-will alone, because the adverse consequences of a failure to achieve anything resembling a comprehensive regional peace agreement are likely to be overwhelming.

It is dangerous to view the consequences of the forthcoming meeting in London as the beginning of the end, or as the turning over of a new leaf. Instead, we should view it as an important step on the path to finding a solution to the impasse. There may be other steps to follow the London meeting, and further negotiations may be necessary to achieve acceptable results.

But let us not make it a watershed event, after which either total disaster is imminent, or the peace track is healthy and kicking again. To intensify our efforts in Jordan, to push forward the common interests of all concerned, primarily our own interests, is a major concern that we should pay close attention to, and consistently carry out.

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UN sanctions on Iraq continue but at expense

By John M. Goshko

UNITED NATIONS—The United States, seeking to head off a Russian plan to ease weapons searches in Iraq, proposed last Monday that the Security Council maintain sanctions on Iraq while holding out the possibility of relief if Baghdad continues to cooperate with UN inspectors.

In language that departed markedly from the unrelenting hard line normally directed by the United States to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's government, US Ambassador Bill Richardson acknowledged that Iraq has made progress in getting rid of its nuclear weapons.

But, Richardson added, "Iraq still has miles to go," and he insisted that it was premature to lift the crippling economic embargo imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Richardson took this position as the 15-nation council held its first review in a year on whether to continue the sanctions. They are supposed to remain in effect until the council is satisfied that Iraq has eliminated its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

While no council member advocates lifting the sanctions at this time, a recent report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said it can find no evidence that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's government has nuclear weapons and material.

That led Russia, which is sympathetic to Iraq's demands for relief, to circulate a draft resolution that would close the so-called "nuclear file" by concluding that Iraq has cooperated fully with the council in the nuclear area and ordering a shift to "passive monitoring" by satellites and sensors rather than frequent, on-the-ground inspections.

The Russian plan has the support of China and France, both permanent Security



Council members, and many other countries concerned that sanctions are having a devastating effect on the health and welfare of the Iraqi population. They see an easing of the inspections as a first step toward lifting the sanctions in favor of a more flexible approach to Iraq.

Eight years after the UN imposed the toughest sanctions ever slapped on any nation, Iraq has lost an estimated \$115 billion in oil revenues. Iraqi leaders argue that the sanctions are responsible for food shortages, malnutrition and premature deaths.

The Russian plan is strongly opposed by the United States, which argues that there should be no letting up on inspections until there is progress toward determining the status of Iraq's chemical and biological warfare programs. Searches in these areas are the responsibility of the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), whose executive chairman, Richard But-

ler, has reported to the council that Iraqi obstruction has prevented any progress by UNSCOM during the last six months.

The United States has said it will use its veto, if necessary, to block the Russian resolution. But US officials would much prefer to reach an accommodation with Moscow that would preserve Washington's contention that the council is united in its approach to Iraq.

For that reason, the United States was urging the council last Monday night to adopt a presidential statement, which does not have the binding effect of a resolution. As described by Richardson, it would recognize progress by Iraq on nuclear arms and its action last month, following an agreement with Secretary General Kofi Annan, in permitting UNSCOM inspectors into previously off-limit presidential palace sites.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed Sahhaf said Tuesday that an agree-

ment negotiated by Secretary General Kofi Annan to permit weapons searches of previously off-limits presidential buildings does not entitle inspectors to an unlimited number of visits over an indefinite period, apparently contradicting UN officials.

At a news conference here, Sahhaf said the 23 February agreement, which averted US air and missile strikes against Iraq, refers only to "an initial visit and subsequent visits." While he was vague about how many "subsequent visits" might be allowed, he left no doubt that Baghdad does not intend to let them take place indefinitely and believes that it, and not the United Nations, has the power to decide when they should be ended.

But the statement also would note that Baghdad still needs to take steps in a number of other areas. If it does, the statement would hold out a promise to take another look at cutting back on inspections sometime in the future.

"We, the United States, acknowledge progress in the areas of access to presidential and sensitive sites," Richardson told reporters. "There appears to be some progress in the nuclear file. However, we believe it is premature to close the nuclear file."

In the nuclear area, Richardson said, Iraq must disclose more information about nuclear enrichment activities, design of its nuclear programs and past imports of nuclear material. He also said there was need for much greater disclosure in the chemical and biological areas, and he said any decision to lift sanctions should take into account Iraq's human rights record, and its continuing failure to account for Kuwaiti prisoners or to make restitution for stolen or destroyed Kuwaiti property.

However, on the humanitarian level sanctions continue to bite. The death of children under 5 rose from 7,000 to 57,000 a year between 1989 and 1996 according to figures provided by UNICEF.

In addition to that, the world organization estimates that more than 1 million children under the age of 5, nearly one-third of the youngsters in the country, are malnourished.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Palestinians cross the demolished Allenby Bridge into Jordan in the wake of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza strip, Sinai, and the Golan Heights in 1967, (photo: UN)

Rabbi inspires respect and revulsion

By Nicholas Goldberg

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—In a bright auditorium inside a dilapidated back-alley synagogue, a slow-moving old rabbi in a glittering costume is gesticulating as he speaks.

On this particular Saturday night, Rav Ovadia Yosef is discussing what activities are or are not allowed on shabbat, the Jewish day of rest. After a few minutes of introductory remarks, he launches into a long and detailed discussion of whether it is permissible to fold one's pants on shabbat before going to bed.

"Are the pants creased already?" he asks rhetorically, indicating to his listeners in the jam-packed auditorium that this crucial distinction holds the solution to the question.

To a nonbeliever, the subject might seem insignificant, but his audience of several hundred black-hatted, ultra-Orthodox Jews that reaches to the door and beyond, into the hallway and down the stairs is pressing forward to hear every word.

Such micro-analyses of what is or is not permissible are common at Yosef's bi-weekly sessions. Several weeks earlier, he delivered his opinion on whether religious law permits Jews to pick their noses on shabbat.

But don't be fooled: The Rav Ovadia Yosef, a 75-year-old Sephardic rabbi in dark sunglasses and flowing robes who was born in Baghdad, Iraq, and brought to Jerusalem as a child is one of the most influential men in Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu comes regularly to seek his support, as did Prime Ministers Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin before him. Although he is unassuming and often inexplicable to much

of the secular establishment, Yosef is a crucial figure at the nexus of religion and state in Israel, and one who cannot be ignored.

The rabbi's power derives primarily from his position as spiritual leader of Shas, a 15-year-old political party that holds 10 of the 120 seats in the Israeli parliament and is part of the ruling government coalition. The party, which offers free schooling and hot meals to children, among other social services, has its political base among disaffected Sephardic Jews of North African origin and is one of the fastest growing movements in Israeli politics.

On most important policy decisions, Shas party leaders turn to Yosef for guidance. To much of the secular world, however, the words of Yosef remain controversial, often inflammatory, sometimes bizarre.

To many secular Israelis, Yosef and his party reflect an extreme, fundamentalist Judaism of long ago that they believe is threatening to become ascendant in the modern state of Israel. They are particularly concerned because Netanyahu, like Rabin, has found it necessary to include Shas in his government coalition, and to grant the party favors and funding and pro-religious legislation to maintain his parliamentary majority.

These critics call Yosef divisive, mean-spirited and antiquated, pointing to some of his more celebrated pronouncements in recent years: Cigarette smokers should be whipped 40 times. If a woman wears a wig as many religious Jewish women do "both she and her wig will be burned in hell." Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was an "evil



crook." National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon "loves pork." A man should not walk between two women, because if he does, "it is as though he walked between two donkeys." When former Education Minister Shulamit Aloni, a secular politician who has clashed repeatedly with the ultra-Orthodox, dies, "we should be glad and hold a banquet." Reform and conservative Jews have "abandoned

"Yosef plants the seeds of destruction between Jew and Jew," said Rabbi Meir Azari, head of Tel Aviv's Reform Jewish congregation. "He is an inciteful and instigating rabbi who is causing a rift in the nation."

Even his detractors, however, agree that Yosef is one of the world's great Torah scholars, with an enormous vocal ability to touch chords in his audience.

He has published more than 18 books, the first of which came out when he was 18 years old. Despite his odd-looking clothes—he wears the traditional robes of the Sephardic rabbinical leaders—and despite his harsh statements, he is, in fact, relatively moderate on issues such as the peace process. In 1989, he ruled that it would be permissible to withdraw from parts of the occupied territories if it would save lives and prevent war. He is a former Sephardic chief rabbi of Israel.

"What's important about him is that he represents the Rabbinic tradition of the Oriental Jews," said Moshe Halberstam, an expert on Jewish philosophy with the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. "He carries with him the whole feeling among the Sephardim of being alienated and discriminated against in the state as well."

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مكتبة النهر

Kohl suffers key setback in regional elections

Far right opposition party surprises in Saxony vote

By William Drozdiak

BERLIN—In a key barometer of voter sentiment five months before national elections, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democrats suffered a sharp setback in legislative elections in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt, while the far-right German People's Union scored an extraordinary breakthrough.

According to preliminary returns, the Christian Democratic Union's share of Sunday's vote plunged to about 22 percent of the total, a drop of more than 12 percent since 1994 elections. The Social Democrats, who hope to break Kohl's 16-year grip on national power this September, confirmed their status as the state's dominant party, while the reform communists of the Party of Democratic Socialism held their position as Saxony-Anhalt's third-largest party. Bringing up the rear were the Free Democrats, Kohl's governing partner, and the Greens—neither of which cleared the 5 percent hurdle needed to qualify for representation in the state legislature.

Analysts said the vote reflects public dismay over record levels of joblessness in Saxony-Anhalt, one of Germany's poorest states. Unemployment in the state, once the industrial heartland of communist East Germany, has soared to 25 percent, the highest among Germany's 16 states.

Peter Hintze, general secretary of the Christian Democratic Union, acknowledged voters had delivered "a clear slap" at his party, but he insisted this would not alter its national campaign strategy or affect its backing of Kohl's quest for an unprecedented fifth term as chancellor.



Saxony-Anhalt's Social Democrats, led by state Premier Reinhard Höppner, improved their share of the

vote since 1994 to about 36 percent but fell well short of expectations. Höppner now faces the difficult task of forming a government either with passive support from the reform communists or in coalition with the Christian Democrats.

The biggest surprise of the ballot was the breakthrough by the German People's Union, a fiercely anti-

immigrant party of right-wing nationalists that rose from obscurity to win a projected 14 percent of the vote. It has emerged in recent years as the country's fastest-growing party of the far right, feeding on voter resentment toward the 9 million foreigners living in Germany—foreigners who are accused by right-wing extremists of stealing jobs and milking the country's generous social welfare benefits.

The German People's Union was founded 10 years ago by Bavarian publisher Gerhard Frey, who lavished enormous sums of money on the Saxony-Anhalt election campaign, spending as much as all other parties combined, according to state authorities. Frey has declared his intention to build a powerful political base in eastern Germany by exploiting rampant popular frustration with unemployment and immigration—even though foreign residents represent little more than 1 percent of the population in the six eastern states.

Posters and leaflets handed out during the Saxony-Anhalt campaign called for immediate expulsion of "all foreign hordes" and "jobs first for Germans only."

They urged that foreign children be barred from German schools and all social spending be directed only for "German purposes." Many People's Union backers appear to be young people, confirming a belief by sociologists that as many as one-third of eastern Germans between the ages of 15 and 25 show extreme right-wing sympathies.

Germany's Office for Protecting the Constitution, a government agency that monitors extremists, condemned the People's Union in a 1996 report for what it described as the party's "anti-semitic and racist tendencies."

Kohl's challenger for the chancellorship, Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder, has pinned his campaign hopes on creating a "new middle" by appealing to disaffected Christian Democrats who yearn for fresh leadership. The Saxony-Anhalt result suggests eastern voters who have soured on Kohl might not necessarily switch their loyalties to the Social Democrats.

Schröder hinted Sunday night that a grand coalition with the Christian Democrats in Saxony-Anhalt might be the best means of combating the rise of the far right.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



First Dolly, and now Bonnie. Last year's break-through in medical science which resulted in the cloning of a sheep via genetic engineering, has born fruit yet again. Dolly has become pregnant and produced her first born.

Afghan talks hit snag

By Kenneth J. Cooper

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan—Peace talks between Afghanistan's warring factions dead-locked Monday over the composition of a representative council that would negotiate a settlement to the nation's civil war.

A disagreement between the Taliban Islamic militia, which controls about two-thirds of Afghanistan, and its factional opponents over the necessary religious qualifications of council members prompted a half-day suspension of the talks so delegates could consult their leaders. The UN-sponsored talks, which began Sunday, are resuming this week.

The Taliban and opposition delegates did agree on an agenda for their talks, which were scheduled to last three to five days. Subjects they agreed to discuss were a cease-fire, prisoner exchange and removal of roadblocks to international humanitarian aid.

But sources here in Pakistan's capital described the disagreement over the negotiating council as serious enough to threaten to break up the first structured peace talks between Afghanistan's factions since the Taliban took control of Kabul, the capital, in September 1996. On April 17, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, won agreement from the major factions to send delegates to this preliminary round of peace talks.

Mohammad Omar, the Taliban's top leader, contended in a statement issued

Sunday that several rounds of talks in the past decade failed to bring peace because they were political, rather than religious. The leadership of both sides agreed to nominate members to a council of ulama, or Islamic scholars, to forge a peace agreement. But their delegations have differed on the acceptable definition of an Islamic scholar.

The five delegates from the Taliban—which has imposed on areas under its control a brand of Islam that it regards as the purest in the world and human rights groups describe as perhaps the most severe—have insisted that only graduates of recognized seminaries would be eligible to serve on the council.

The nine-member delegation from the northern-based opposition—which includes elements of the Afghan government the Taliban drove from Kabul—has argued for a broader definition that would include scholars who specialize in subjects other than Islam.

Neither side appeared ready to compromise.

Sources said Taliban representatives rejected a proposal by Ibrahim Saleh Bakr, an official of the Organization of the Islamic Conference who is co-chairman of the talks, to permit Islamic scholars and any others with an Islamic background to serve on the council.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Texas basmati causes patent furor in India

By Kenneth J. Cooper

NEW DELHI—Farmers have marched on the US Embassy here in India's capital to protest what they condemn as a treacherous act of "biopiracy" against which officials have vowed to fight all the way to Geneva and Washington.

The uproar is about rice. A US patent granted last year to a small Texas company for a strain of basmati, a fragrant rice that originated in the subcontinent, has stirred considerable angst in India.

The controversy also has exposed widespread misunderstanding about patents among the public in India. At risk in the dispute is the monopoly India and neighboring Pakistan have enjoyed on an agricultural commodity of internationally recognized quality.

Both countries export premium-priced basmati, a flavorful long-grain variety, primarily to the Arabian Gulf and Europe. About 10 percent of India's exports go to an underdeveloped American market confined mostly to ethnic grocers and restaurants. Worldwide, India annually sells about \$200 million worth of basmati.

Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha recently cited the patent controlled by RiceTec Incorporated, based in Alvin, Texas, as the kind of issue that the new Hindu-nationalist dominated government would take up at the World Trade Organization in Geneva.

"It confirms our apprehension that people might take advantage of a (free trade) regime of this kind and then start depriving us of what has traditionally belonged to us through the centuries," Sinha said in an interview.

India has formed an inter-departmental committee to recommend whether the government should file a challenge with the US Patent Office, possibly on the grounds that RiceTec's variety is not distinctive, says a senior bureaucrat in the Ministry of Industry. Pakistan also is reviewing the issue.

RiceTec has contended basmati is a generic name and it has a legitimate claim to a new variety that can be grown in the United States. Basmati had not been registered as either a trademark or a geographic appellation specific to the Indian subcontinent.



Regional researchers had believed basmati could be grown only in northwestern India and bordering areas of Pakistan where a particular combination of climate and soil composition produce the rice's distinctive aroma. In the 1970s, Thailand developed a similar variety but did not call it basmati, a Hindi word that

means "full of fragrance." In India and Pakistan, many growers mistakenly believe the patent prevents them from exporting their basmati to the United States. One rice farmer interviewed by the Indian Express newspaper in northwestern Punjab state erroneously suggested RiceTec would have to "pay us a tax." The reporter misinformed the growers, warning they would have to pay royalties to the American company. Educated activists frequently talk as if the US government stands to benefit from the patent.

India does not patent plants, and intellectual property rights to other products have been widely flouted. US officials have pressed India's government to comply with World Trade Organization rules and strengthen laws to curb sales of pirated videotapes of Hollywood movies and knock-offs of American pharmaceuticals and agricultural chemicals.

But many activists have charged that it has been Westerners who have violated the nation's traditional intellectual property. Last year, India succeeded in overturning a US patent granted in 1995 to two University of Mississippi researchers on the use of the spice turmeric to heal wounds, a traditional remedy.

The Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in New Delhi has identified 22 US patents on what the advocacy group describes as previously known properties of indigenous, uncultivated plants.

One major Indian exporter of basmati, Gurnam Arora, said he was not worried about competition from RiceTec because the patent dispute could expand the US market by increasing public awareness.

"Basmati rice growing in this part of the world is the best. Even our inferior grades of rice are better than theirs," Arora asserted. "Now, it's up to the customer to decide whether they want this so-called basmati or the original."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

China's low-tech consumer electronics revolution

By Anthony Kuhn

ZHONGSHAN, China—The video CD is sweeping across China and the low-tech consumer electronics revolution is having an impact on California's two most dynamic industries, technology and entertainment.

The sudden emergence of the inexpensive video player here is undercutting the conventional wisdom in the consumer electronics industry that acceptance in US and Japanese markets is the critical tests for products ranging from the Walkman to the DVD.

Apparently nobody told entrepreneurs such as Hu Zhibiao that the higher quality, more expensive DVD now being offered in Western markets was supposed to be the new alternative in VCRs and video tape.

Employing lower-cost video technology largely ignored in the West, Hu has earned his company, the Guangdong Idall Electronics Co., a commanding share of a market worth an estimated \$2.4 billion in China last year while establishing the video CD (VCD) as the standard format for China's millions to watch movies at home.

The video CD is hardly on the cutting edge of technology. The player is basically an upgraded version of the audio CD and even after compression it still takes two to three compact disks to hold most feature films. Resolution at best is only as good as a videotape.

In the past, Hu and China's VCD

mania might have been dismissed as an aberration. But some industry analysts think China's VCD experience has big implications for the global economy.

The VCD phenomenon "is the first sign that the locus of consumer buying power is shifting toward emerging markets, particularly China and its growing middle class," said Ted Pine, President of Info-Tech Research, a Woodstock, Vermont-based company that analyzes the electronic publishing and multimedia entertainment industries.

The official Beijing Daily recently touted the VCD as "the pride of the Chinese people." In his first news conference as China's new Premier, Zhu Rongji cited China's upsurge in VCD production as an indicator of China's growing economic might.

But the dark side of the VCD industry is that it has opened up a troubling new front in Hollywood's ongoing battle against video piracy.

Cheaper to make and easier to conceal than video cassettes or large laser discs, pirated CDs of recent Hollywood hits are fueling a huge, clandestine economy all over China.

Yet Hollywood film studios are optimistic that the increasing availability of legitimate VCDs, along with stricter enforcement of China's copyright laws, eventually will win out over piracy.

"In every market place in the world, the legitimate market is always preceded by a piracy market," said Tony Wells, Senior Vice President in charge of Asia-Pacific

markets at Warner Brothers Home Video International.

So far, Warner is the only major Hollywood studio licensing its movies on VCDs in China with some 60 titles available so far, but industry experts say Disney and Columbia TriStar are negotiating to begin licensing this year.

Several technology companies have profited handsomely from China's booming VCD market, including companies that supply the silicon chips used to encode and decode the VCD's digitized video.

"In consumer electronics history," says Silicon Valley entrepreneur Andre Balkanski, whose company, the Milpitas-based C-Cube Microsystems, supplies silicon chips to Chinese VCD enterprises, "no product has ever been adopted as fast as the video CD in China."

In the early 1990s, entrepreneurs Balkanski and Edmund Sun pioneered the first silicon chips for VCD players. Now C-Cube provides some 70 percent of the chips used in Chinese VCD players. Their logo is emblazoned on many Chinese VCD machines much as chip-maker Intel's is on computers.

C-Cube also is the leading supplier of chips for digital versatile disk (DVD) drives in computers. DVDs are the new consumer electronics alternative being offered in the United States as a higher quality, digital alternative to videotape. Because of sluggish DVD sales, only three percent of C-Cube's sales last year were to worldwide DVD markets, while the China VCD market accounted for 45 percent.

In the United States, feature films on video CD are hard to find outside Chinatown stores. While many new computers sold in America can read video CDs, Hollywood will not invest in video CD movie titles in America because the format cannot compete with other popular storage formats such as video cassette tapes or DVDs.

The fact that the video CD was "an expensive new technology played into the hands of Chinese entrepreneurs such as Hu Zhibiao, who looked at the VCD and saw a low-cost product uniquely suited to China's economy."

In 1993, Hu examined the first VCD players to hit the Chinese market and discovered that they were essentially \$70 audio CD players converted into VCD

players for about \$50. Video CDs could be pressed for 80 cents a piece, compared to \$2 for a video cassette tape.

VCD players range in size from portable models the size of a Sony Discman to high-end models that can hold multiple discs.

Except imported disk drives and silicon chips, most of the VCD player's parts were made by electronics manufacturers around Zhongshan. Hu's hometown in Guangdong province's highly industrialized Pearl River delta.

As Hu launched his first VCD player factory in 1995, other such enterprises were sprouting all over the delta. Most were peasant households that assembled VCD players on their beds and kitchen tables. A whole family could turn out some 10 machines a day, earning \$125—more than half the average Chinese peasant's annual income.

The peasants had no research and design costs and used smuggled parts to avoid paying taxes. "If you have a screwdriver, you're a factory," they boast. Within a year, there were 600 VCD machine makers in China, mostly in the delta.

Hu also saw that the VCD was the perfect alternative to Chinese television's sorry array of entertainment programming.

More than 90 percent of urban Chinese households have color TVs serving up old revolutionary war movies and late serial dramas. Communist ideology and lack of money keep all but the worst foreign

movies off the air. Satellite TV dishes are banned and the depressed mainland movie industry is turning out fewer movies.

As a result, China remains reliant on cheap pirated movies for home entertainment, despite frequent raids by police.

Last year, Hu's company hired Hong Kong action superstar Jackie Chan to advertise its VCD players and spent \$25.3 million in competitive bidding for prime-time slots following China Central Television's evening news, watched nightly by an estimated 800 million Chinese.

Then, Hu slashed prices on his VCD players by 45 percent, down below \$150 and well within the reach of Chinese urbanites. The cuts ended market domination by foreign companies including JVC, Samsung and Panasonic and eliminated about half of his 600 domestic rivals.

While the marketing hype surrounding VCDs has produced a glut of machines this year, Idall's economies of scale—they expect to turn out 4 million VCD players this year—help Hu to maintain profit margins around 25 percent compared to less than 10 percent for the rest of the industry.

For much of East Asia, video CD is the standard for home theater, and although DVD players are expected eventually to wrest the market from VCDs, the two formats are likely to coexist for a decade or longer as VCDs can be played on DVD players.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Aqaba Scene

THE RADISSON SAS Resort Aqaba recently featured pianist Renee Clark. When the top-of-the-crop pop performer got into her groove—and it didn't take but a moment—there wasn't a soul in the place that wasn't clapping, singing, dancing or doing all three. When Renee got down, it seemed the whole town stood up and took notice. Entertainment's never been so 'live'!



Marwan Kassab Bashi

A spiritual bridge to the Arab world

By Anca de Maio
Special to The Star

Perhaps the most famous and successful artist of the Arab diaspora, Germany-based Syrian artist Marwan Kassab Bashi is the protagonist of a special cultural event that has taken place simultaneously in two Palestinian cities and Amman. His donation of 75 etchings and watercolors to Palestine, currently exhibited at Bir Zeit University and Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre in Ramallah, was also celebrated in Amman on April 17 at Darat Al Funun by inaugurating his etching exhibition titled "A Suite of Heads."

The opening was followed by Palestinian Tania Tamari Nasir's rendition of the cycle "The Miracle of Life" by Palestinian poet Jabara Ibrahim Jabara set to music by Agnes Bashir.

Invited by Bir Zeit University, Bashi not only promised to display but also decided to make a gift to the Palestinian people. "As I could not accompany the collection I sent to the West Bank (for the reason that I reject the aggressive Zionist policy of Israel), I was happy to accept Suhla Shoman's idea to celebrate the event in Amman," explained the artist in an interview with The Star. "Instead of me, Jörn Merkert, the director of the Berlin Museum, attended the two ceremonies in Ramallah and at Bir Zeit on the 13th and 14th of April, respectively."

Using video documentation (an interview with the artist and a film about his artwork), Merkert introduced Bashi to the Palestinian audience. It was not only art students who showed extreme interest in knowing more about this Arab artist who has gained an enormous reputation in the West and which he wanted to share his achievements with them. "The youth in particular seemed very touched by Marwan's gesture of solidarity," Merkert pointed out. "My impression is that the Palestinian younger generation longs for more cultural exchanges of this kind," he said.

The donation consists of 60 etchings and seven watercolors carefully selected by the artist with the aim of offering a comprehensive image

of his work and of his artistic development up to the very present. "The 75 pieces are authentic treasures and not in any way 'left-overs'," pointed out the director of the Berlin Museum. Today this collection belongs to the Palestinian people. Its permanent home will be the art museum that is to be built in Bethlehem by the year 2000. Until that time the entire collection will be kept at the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre in Ramallah.

Soprano Tania Nasir came from Jerusalem to Amman to sing on this occasion and to express her gratitude for Bashi's gesture. "Tania Nasir and I have a very beautiful pen friendship that started exactly one year ago," Bashi said. "We have exchanged written ideas on music, sculpture, clouds and other ordinary things, without actually knowing each other," the artist elaborated, mentioning that they met for the first time the day of the celebration at the King Hussein Bridge. The "richness" Bashi finds in such special friendships as Tania's (or that of a very dear friend from Damascus) makes him believe in the privileged connection that only spiritually related people can establish.

The 99 etchings on display at Darat Al Funun until May 21 are the result of seven months of frantic work. "Still warm," the collection brings together Bashi's very latest work. He started to work on a "heads" project in August 1997 and finished it up last month. "In the beginning I wanted to do only 15 or 20 etchings, but I simply could not stop before I completed the 140th piece," he said with a smile behind his



round sunglasses. "It has been dramatic, it's been like a fury, but now I know it's done," he added with satisfaction in his voice. The fact that this collection came out of an imperative is the artist's guarantee that he has done authentic valuable work. When he felt he had exhausted the theme, he chose 99 out of the 140 etchings.

"It was not easy, but I was keen on this number because God's names are 99," he explained. As Merkert put it, "these inner portraits show God that you understand you are His creation."

First prefigured in an etching from the '60s (evocative of the immemorial time of the genesis), Bashi theme of "the head as a cosmos" inspired the poet Adonis in 1993. Encouraged in turn by Adonis's poem, he persisted with this idea and explored more of its mystic dimensions in the present 99 black and white heads. Displayed in three rows, they form an impressive rectangular block that Merkert compares to "a kind of ocean in constant movement." Its disorderly order is fascinating to the eye. "You are floating with it," making discoveries," the director of Berlin Museum commented. While looking for similarities, one finds the details that make two resembling heads completely different. Just like the cosmos itself, Bashi's heads are in continuous transformation. The dialectics of "composition and decomposition" governs his black and white universe of plaited and crowded lines, roughened and smooth surfaces, playful

and transparent filigrees.

The complex intaglio technique on zinc and copper plates with dry-point, aquatint, asphalt or acid bath, differ very much from the painting techniques (colors, materiality, perspectives). The etcher works on the photographic negative, as it were, of the target image, the final result being always a surprise. A real architect, Bashi calculates and controls with precision the printing effects. Sometimes he stops in the midst of etching just to print a first trial and see what corrections should be made. "The artist is a worker, an order-maker and not a dreamer in an ivory tower," he stressed stroking his short white beard.

Bashi hears in his genes the spiritual heritage of the Orient. Sometimes contested by those that prefer to label him as a German expressionist, Marwan's belonging to the large Arab spiritual family is testified by the very inner mechanism of his whole creation. In both painting and etching, the artist draws closer and closer to "the border of the absolute" in an "indirect" and "long" movement resembling the mystic Darwish dance. The creative gesture is repeated again and again as if in an endless effort of correction, of doing and undoing, which has nothing to do with the aggressive and colourful straightforwardness of European expressionists.

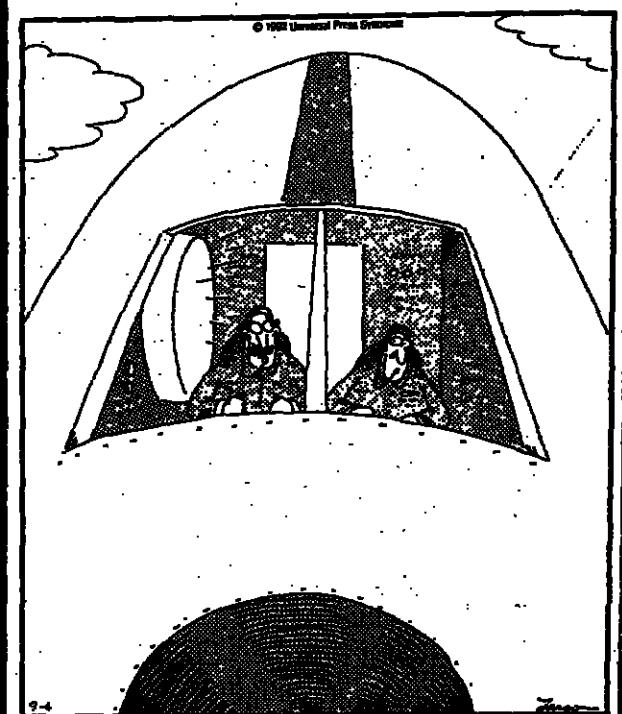
The fact that Bashi needs to come now and again to "Arabia" also shows how close his ties are in this corner of the world where he started his earthly voyage. Although he is fully satisfied with the life he has been living in Berlin since 1957, Bashi constantly thinks of his homeland and returns to it whenever he has the chance. The artist left the sunny gardens of Darat al Funun on Wednesday and flew back to "dark, rainy and depressive Berlin" with the resolve to return again next year. ■

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



To the horror of the lifeboat's other members, Madonna loses her balance and falls on her face.



Indispensable workers on any porcupine ranch, these amazing dogs will sometimes run across the backs of their charges.

AGENDA

- Films**
- At the Royal Cultural Center, the schedule for the final two days of Scandinavian Film Week is as follows:
 - April 30—*Benjamin Deneve*, 11 am.
 - May 1—*The Brothers Lionheart*, 7 pm.
 - May 2—*Kalle and the Angels*, 11 am.
 - May 3—*Nature's Warrior*, 4:30 pm.
 - May 4—*Whitbear King Valenon*, 7 pm.
 - All films are subtitled in English. Recommended for children age 9 and up. Admission free, but to assure yourself of seating, pick up tickets early at the Royal Cultural Center.
 - At the French Cultural Center (Jabal Weibdeh):
 - May 4—*Le sauvage*, starring Catherine Deneuve. Two showings, at 6:30 pm and 8:30 pm.
 - At Instituto Cervantes (near third circle, behind the Intercontinental Hotel):
 - April 30—*El verdugo* (1963). Classical film of L. Garcia Berlanga, 5 pm.
 - At the American Center, Abdoun:
 - April 30—*The Last World*, 5 pm.
 - May 1—*Jurassic Park II*.
- Lectures**
- At the British Council: May 4—Dr. Nicholas Linfield's series of talks on literature continues with "A Literary Bestiary: Poems about Animals." 5 pm.
- Exhibitions**
- At Instituto Cervantes: April 26—The exhibition "Sinfonia of colors" by Ecuadorian artist Omedo Quimbato runs until May 12.
 - At Darat al Funun, Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan shows 99 new pieces entitled "A Suite of Heads" until 25 May. See review, this page.
 - Also at Darat al Funun, Lebanese/American artist and poet Etel Adnan's visual "transfections" of poems written by others—"Artist's Books of Art and Poetry"—is on until May 12.

Jordan Television celebrates thirty years of broadcasting

By Hala Shaker
Special to The Star

April 27, 1968 represents a historic date for Jordan. That day marked the first television transmission in the Kingdom with four hours of programming in black and white. The occasion is celebrated annually by the Radio and Television Corp., being the fulfillment of the dream that was born on 11 July 1966 when His Majesty King Hussein laid the first foundation for television in Jordan. Though confronted with an arduous task in the early days of its existence, Jordan Television is now flourishing and has surpassed other media organizations at home as well as abroad.

In 1972 Jordan Television became the first station in the region to begin operating a second channel and again Jordan pioneered when JTV became the first station in the region to broadcast in color using the PAL-G system in 1974.

Hence it can be said that Jordan Television is a success story, because the role of JTV in the early days was based on the philosophy that television was primarily responsible for providing comprehensive and informative programming—far different from the attitude that TV is mainly a mode of entertainment. This philosophy means that Jordan Television is invested with an enormous public responsibility.

In 1985, Radio Jordan and the Jordan Television Corp., both of which operated separately, were merged to constitute the Jordan Radio and Television Corp., which currently consists of the following: the Television and Radio Stations, Jordan Arab Satellite Station, the Department of Engineering Affairs, the Department of Financial and Administrative Affairs, the Department of Development and Training, the Department of Commercial Advertising and Marketing and the Department of International Relations.

Another major breakthrough for JTV involves its international broadcasts via satellite. Since 1993, people all over the world

have been able to receive up-to-date programs from Jordan transmitted via the Jordan Arab Satellite Station which was officially opened by His Majesty on the 27 April 1993. The station is carried on ArabSat 2A and covers the Middle East, South Europe, the Near East and North Turkey. It also relays one of ORBIT channels to cover Europe and America. Today this channel transmits an average of 17 hours of programming each day.

The fact that JTV was able to enter the Satellite era is an inevitable consequence of the continuous process of development and updating that have been taking place from its beginnings to the present day. During the press conference held on Saturday to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of JTV, Mr. Naser Judeh, director-general of Jordan Radio and Television Corp., told news reporters, "this is also the fifth anniversary of Jordan Arab Satellite Station. We are working to restructure this station. We will be reevaluating its programs and supporting it by all means, as it transmits Jordan's image and identity culturally, socially and politically to the whole world. The station should be supported in the most suitable way, especially taking into consideration the competition of the other satellite stations in the region."

Adnan Al Zu'bi, Director of the Jordan Arab Satellite Station told The Star, "We are using every effort to improve our work because this station carries a noble message. Starting from 1 May, there will be a considerable change which goes in line with our aspirations and hopes. Jordan Arab Satellite Station has transmitted Jordan's local image to many countries around the world. We've seen a considerable response to our Jordan Arab Satellite Station, not only from Arab countries but also from places like America, Europe and Russia. In the future we hope to expand our transmission to new areas around the globe and to improve the quality of programs presented."

The older JTV grows the greater its appeal. Today JTV has become a leading source of information in the region. Its viewing audience is always increasing. JTV offers a colourful,

rich and diverse blend of programs: Economic and political affairs, weather forecasts, current affairs programs, press reviews, entertainment and sport programs, movies, dramas, children programs, are all making JTV the most popular and reliable medium for news and entertainment. Saleh Eremeh, Director of Channel One, noted with pride, "this is not surprising in light of our taking into account the responsibility of broadcasters towards their audiences."

The main channel on JTV is the most Arabic-language channel which broadcasts news, entertainment, educational programs, and sports. Channel Two is primarily a foreign-language channel. Hala Zureqat, director of Channel Two pointed out that the channel "offers new and developed programs which contribute to the process of education and the transmission of culture in our country." She added that JTV "always takes into account the content of the programs selected, approving what does not contradict our beliefs and traditions."

During the anniversary conference Judeh talked extensively about the new character of Jordan TV. He said that the screen will be new in form—the logo—and content—the programming. He also announced that Jordan Television will be launching a third channel, devoted mainly to cultural and sport affairs and possibly to parliamentary affairs.

Beginning 27 April, the daily hours of transmission on Channel One increased to 20 hours and thirty minutes, with Jordan Television production taking 60 percent of total time. Arab production taking 20 percent and foreign production filling in three hours a week. The time dedicated to the programs transmitted on air increased to 33 hours per week. Children's programs increased to 11 hours each week.

Jordan Television has developed a great deal over its first 30 years, but a great deal has yet to be accomplished, especially in light of the rapidly increasing flood of information and technology in the world. JTV looks forward to the challenge. ■



Jerusalem Intermarkets wins design logo for JTV

JORDAN TELEVISION has just changed its logo. The new designed by Jerusalem Intermarkets, a top advertising firm in the country. The logo will be used on Jordan Television 30th anniversary. JTV Director-General, Mr. Judeh said the new logo which was selected from among several designs by different firms and individuals specializing in advertising will serve as the logo for all Jordan Television channels until the end of this year. He noted that the new logo could be adopted as a permanent Jordan Television logo in the future.

Intermarkets firms is one of the leading regional advertising agencies and specializing also in public relations throughout the Middle East and has branches in most of the Arab capitals. By winning the competition for Jordan Television, Intermarkets has thus added one more achievement to its own numerous accomplishments. ■

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The Star's GUIDE

TV

Programs on JTV from 2—8 May

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY
 3:00—Holy Koran
 3:10—Johnny Quest
 3:30—I Wanna Be...
 4:00—Neighbors
 4:30—Ocean Wilds
 5:00—French Program
 6:00—Acapulco Bay
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—Discovery Magazine
 7:30—News Headlines
 7:35—You Bet Your Life
 8:00—Cinema, Cinema
 8:30—Prism
 9:10—Sirens
 10:00—News At Ten
 10:30—Feature Film: *R.S.V.P.*
 starring: Patrick Dempsey and Kelly Lynch
 12:00—Are You Being Served

SUNDAY
 3:00—Holy Koran
 3:10—The Pumpkin Patch
 3:30—The Pink Panther
 3:50—Skippy
 4:30—The American Chart Show
 5:00—In The Wild
 6:00—French Program
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—A Tour in France
 7:30—News Headlines
 7:35—Life's most Embarrassing Moments
 8:00—People and Places in Africa
 8:30—Challenges
 9:10—Renegade
 10:00—News At Ten
 10:30—Silent Witness
 11:10—The Upper Hand

MONDAY
 3:00—Holy Koran
 3:30—Fred and Barney Show
 3:50—Raiders of the South Pacific
 4:00—Neighbors

Kelly Lynch in *R.S.V.P.*, Saturday at 10:30 pm.

TUESDAY
 3:00—Holy Koran
 4:30—Last Frontiers
 5:00—French Program
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—French Programs
 7:30—News Headlines
 7:35—Hope and Gloria
 8:00—Perspective
 9:10—Marker
 10:00—News At Ten
 10:30—Law and Order
 11:10—Bay Watch Nights

Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 4634149): *Crying Freeman*
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 4634149): *'Dantella' (Arabic)*
- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): *Titanic / Scream 2*
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): *Flubber / Titanic*
- Plaza (Tel: 5699238): *Titanic*
- Concord I (Tel: 5677420): *LA Confidential*
- Concord II (Tel: 5677420): *Kananana (Arabic)*

12:00—Metro Café

WEDNESDAY
 3:00—Holy Koran
 3:10—Mr. Bogus Show
 3:30—Oliver Twist
 4:00—The Album Show
 5:00—French Program
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—French Programs
 7:30—News Headlines
 7:35—Campus Cops
 8:00—Envoy Special
 9:10—Kung Fu
 10:00—News At Ten
 10:30—Mini Series

THURSDAY
 3:00—Holy Koran
 3:10—Dinky Dis
 3:30—The Animal Park
 4:00—French Programs
 4:30—Blue Water Dreaming
 5:00—NBA Games
 6:00—The Burned Bridge
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—French Programs
 7:30—News Headlines
 7:35—Big Brother Jake
 8:00—Great Romance
 8:30—Dr. Quinn, The Medicine Woman
 9:10—The Oprah Winfrey Show
 10:00—News At Ten
 10:30—Feature Film
 12:00—Can't Hurry Love

FRIDAY
 2:00—Holy Koran
 2:10—Teddy Ruxpin
 2:30—Wishbone
 3:00—French Programs
 5:00—He Shoots, He Scores
 5:30—Blue Water Dreaming
 6:00—Tarzan
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—French Program
 7:30—News Headlines
 7:35—Step by Step
 8:00—What would you do
 8:30—Rhodes
 10:00—News At Ten
 10:30—Feature Film

8:00—Life on the Internet
 8:30—The Album Show
 9:10—Adventures of Brisco County
 10:00—News At Ten
 10:30—Drama
 12:00—The Nanny

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

SAMEDI
 17:00—Faut pas rêver
 19:00—Le Journal
 19:15—Magazine
 L'œil de Colomb

DIMANCHE
 18:00—Bonne espérance
 19:00—Le Journal
 19:15—Le Tour de France

LUNDI
 17:00—Thalassa
 19:00—Le Journal
 19:15—Variétés

MARDI
 18:00—Les cœurs brûlés (2)
 19:00—Le Journal
 19:15—Magazine

MERCREDI
 18:00—L'histoire
 19:00—Le Journal
 19:15—F-M6

JEUDI
 16:10—L'école des fans
 19:00—Le Journal
 19:15—Atomes crochus

VENREDI
 17:30—Fort Boyard
 19:00—Le Journal
 19:15—Magazine

Programs are subject to change by JTV

MUSIC

'Titanic' soundtrack a record breaker

By Jerry Crowe

HOLLYWOOD—It's not only the movie industry that's enjoying 'Titanic' success this year. Thanks to the multimillion-selling soundtrack from the biggest-grossing movie in history, the record industry is enjoying a robust growth in album sales.

The mostly instrumental James Horner score has topped the national sales chart for 15 consecutive weeks and so dominated the record marketplace this year that it has pushed releases by superstars such as Madonna and Pearl Jam into the background.

"Number 2 is the virtual number 1 these days because number 1 is no longer within the realm of mortal," says Bob Merlis, senior vice president of corporate communications at Warner Brothers Records. "We couldn't get there with Madonna or Van Halen or Eric Clapton."

'Titanic' has sold nearly \$100 million worth of albums this year—nearly 7.5 million copies, including another 268,000 last week. That's almost twice the total of the year's number two album, Celine Dion's 'Let's Talk About Love,' which, like the soundtrack, includes the singer's 'Titanic' theme, 'My Heart Will Go On.'

The Dion album, which had already sold more than 2.5 million copies before sales of the soundtrack began to skyrocket in early January, has sold another 3.8 million this year.

Driven by the soundtrack, which long ago replaced 'Chariots of Fire' as the best-selling instrumental film score of all time, total US album sales reached 160 million units during the first three months of 1998. That's up 7.6 percent for the same period a year ago (148 million units).

The combined 10.2 million units sold by the soundtrack and Dion albums during the first quarter are responsible for the vast majority of that growth, allowing the record industry to continue its rebound from a mid-'90s stagnation.



After two years of minimal gains, album sales jumped 5.7 percent in 1997.

But retailers aren't about to decry 'Titanic's' dominance. They say 'Titanic' pulls buyers who wouldn't normally be there into their stores.

'Titanic' is the leader that has taken us to this growth," says Mike Shalett, CEO of SoundScan, which monitors US record sales.

Among genres, the big winners were rap and soundtracks, which were up 16 percent and 14 percent, respectively. Sales of hard rock records were up 11 percent, while alternative rock sales were down 12 percent and country was off 7 percent.

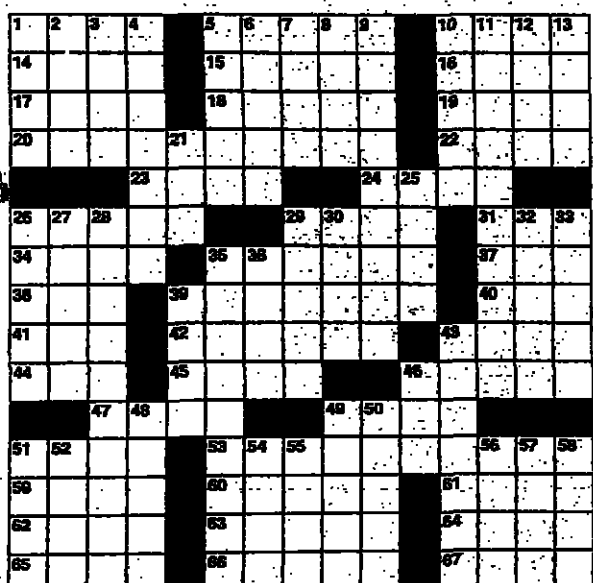
The rap surge was led by '97 holdover albums by Sean 'Puffy' Combs, Will Smith and Mase, as well as new collections by Slick the Stroker and C-Murder.

Also selling well are albums by an eclectic mix of other artists—from newer releases by Madonna and Eric Clapton to older titles by Savage Garden, Garth Brooks, the Backstreet Boys and Will Smith.

"The 'Titanic' soundtrack has created an excitement that has led people back to retail, and once they're there, they're seeing a lot of exciting merchandise," says Scott Levin, director of marketing for the Musicland Group. "Once we get them in the store, the hooks are there."

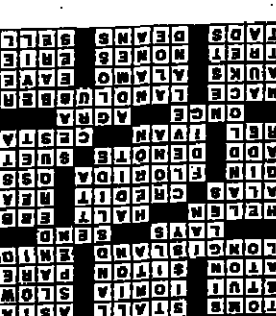
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- ACROSS**
 1 Some alloy
 2 Attempt to avoid
 3 The inevitable
 4 Thin Mar
 5 Needle case
 6 Ancient Greek region
 7 Highway warning
 8 Use a... of
 9 Tensest
 10 Suppress
 11 Cursil
 12 A sound
 13 Wile of
 14 Genial
 15 Balloons
 16 Tensile
 17 Parv victim
 18 Senry's command
 19 Wane
 20 Woe is met
 21 Type of card
 22 Peggy of TV
 23 Soie
 24 The Sunshine
- DOWN**
 1 Freshwater duck
 2 Holy Roman emperor
 3 Elementary particle
 4 A Barrett
 5 Spoken of
 6 Works the land
 7 Rectangular plaster
 8 Ostably
 9 Overstating
 10 CO day
 11 Deliberate
 12 Cones
 13 Inspired with reverence
 14 Ninth day before the ides
 15 Ashabule's waistront
 16 Small amounts
 17 School blowps
 18 Use some countries
 19 Long-necked water
 20 Mine suit
 21 Hearse
 22 Trump in card games
 23 American League team
 24 A Barrett
 25 Bank-egoy
 26 Naval builders
 27 French vineyard
 28 Aerles
 29 Madison street
 30 minone
 31 Sheep
 32 O.T. book
 33 Glorile
 34 E. vera
 35 Werdly's dog
 36 Exposed to the public
 37 Salaric
 38 Lively dance

SOLUTION:

—THIS WEEK'S—
HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: The sun is in Taurus this week, helping us make good decisions.

Aries (March 21-April 19). Use money that comes from far away to make your work easier. Postpone chores so you can get in more reading time instead.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). You're very strong. Remember to be gentle too. Money will slip through your fingers unless you keep a tight grip on it.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). You'll be much stronger, although you still have to complete a tough assignment. Money is coming in for work previously done.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Make plans with friends and follow through on them. Accept the applause. You've earned it. The money comes in.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Just do as you're told. Save your complaints for your friends. They'll be glad to give you sympathy and good advice. What's required, however, is work and research.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Entertain a creative person's advances. An older person's demands interfere with your domestic plans. Remember to take care of obligations even if you don't feel like it.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The deal you close could help you gain financial security. Make sure loved ones' considerations are all answered before you sign anything.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Finalize new living arrangements so you can buy household items together. Travel and romance with foreigners is favored. Don't wait for it to happen.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Dig in to complete a tough assignment. Heed your friends' coaching to win. Pay off a debt and you'll be able to borrow more.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You may have to cancel your appointment. You're having too much fun with your sweetheart to go anywhere.

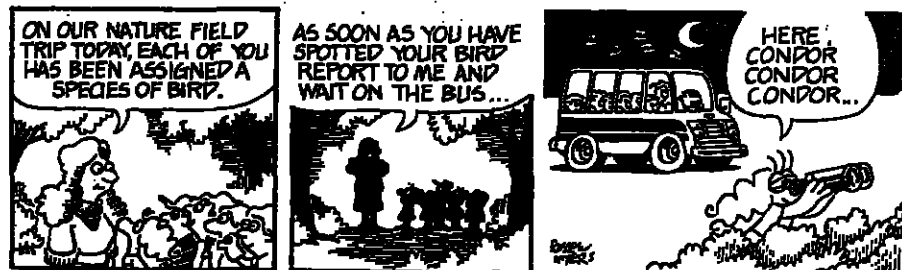
Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Stay home as much as possible. Domestic chores interfere with other plans. A partner can help bail you out of a jam.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). State your position boldly. You are right. Use what you've learned to help you get a big job done.

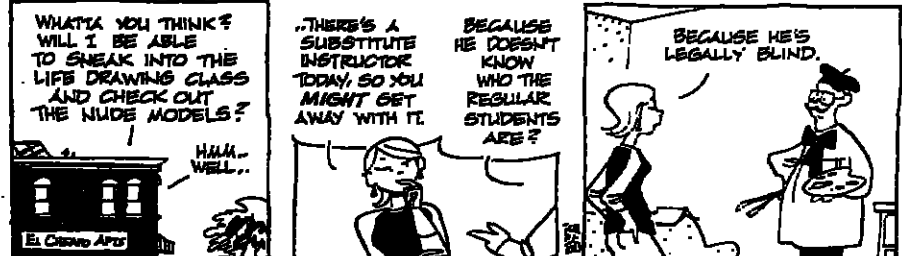
If You're Having a Birthday This Week: You're awesome this year. You won't know your own power, so be careful.

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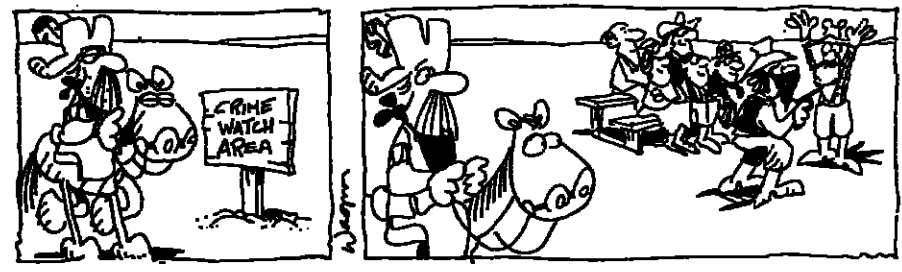
PERKY & BEANZ by Russell Myers



ELWOOD by Ben Templeton & Tom Forman

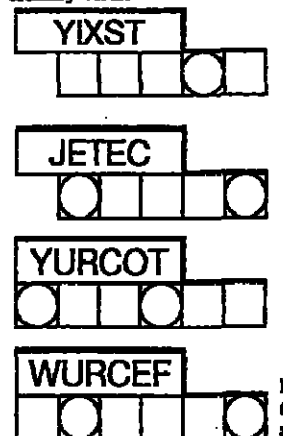


CATFISH by Fred Wagner & Tom Cone



Jumble

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Print answer here: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

ANSWERS: SIXTY EIGHT OUTCRY CUREFEW
 TWO LITTLE
 ANSWER: What everyone thought her little twins were

Words of Wisdom

Confessing guilt will avoid a trial.

The worst cause often is accompanied by the most noise.

Good manners are nothing more than good sense put to good use.

You can underestimate your enemies only once.

Research is what people do until they know what they want to do.

The best course of action is usually the hardest one.

If you want to keep people from jumping down your throat, try keeping your mouth shut.

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CHANNE



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Fabled lunatic asylum of old London changes its image

Bedlam breaks loose

THE HISTORY OF BETHLEM, by Jonathan Andrews, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker and Keir Waddington. Routledge £15.00, 752 pages

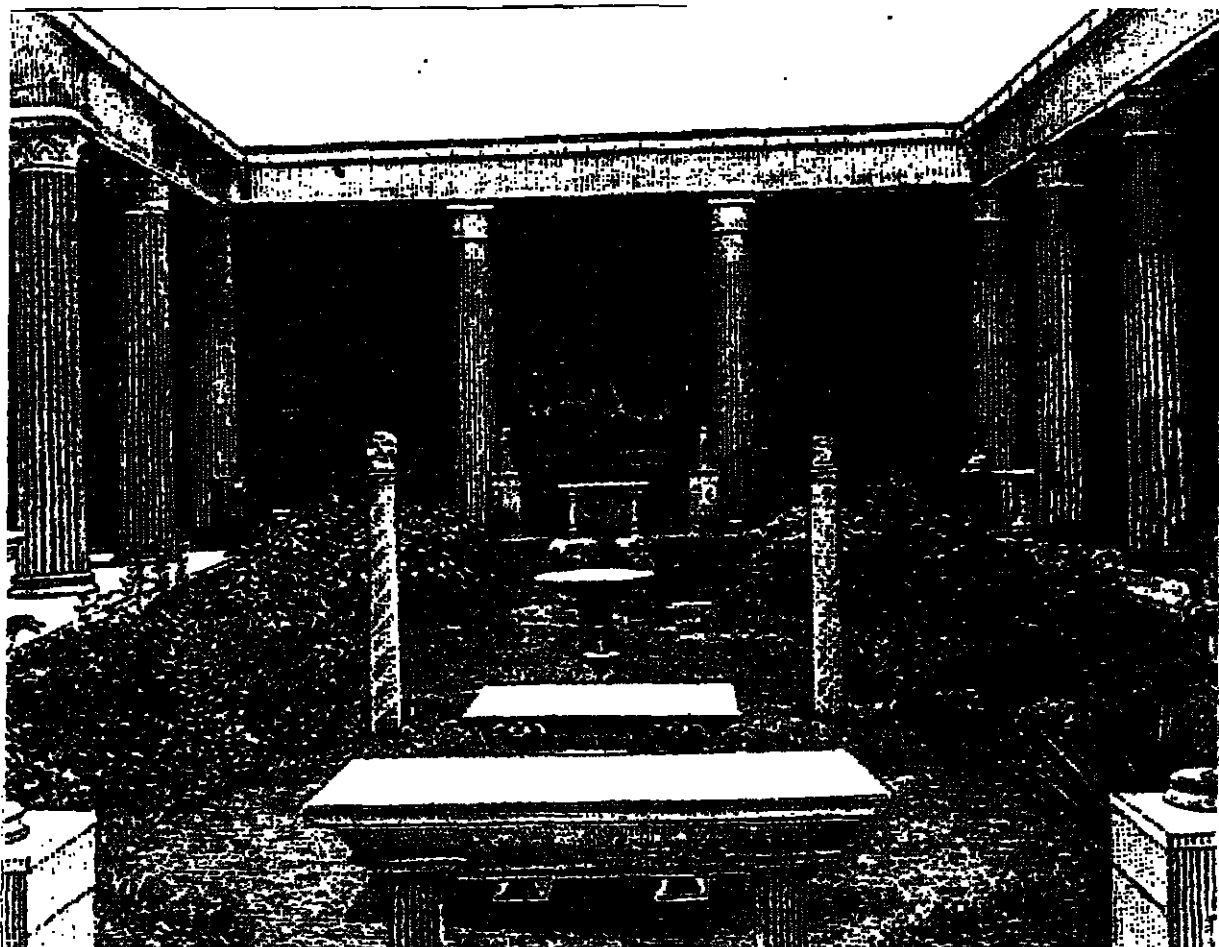
For most of us, Bethlem hospital is best known as "Bedlam," a catch-all caricature for lunatic turmoil and inhuman care. In the 16th century Shakespeare and other satirists used images from Bedlam to symbolize the madhouse morals of a corrupt society. In the 18th century, visits to the hospital, re-housed in a magnificent neo-classical building, adorned at the entrance by Cibber's Michelangelo statues of "Melancholy" and "Raving Madness," became a popular pastime.

Now domiciled far from the public gaze in rural Kent, and amalgamated since 1948 with the Maudsley, one of the world's best known psychiatric teaching hospitals, Bethlem celebrated its 750th anniversary last year. To mark the event, five social historians have collaborated on a long-overdue history of this unique institution, which has a strong claim to be the oldest foundation in Europe with an unbroken history of sheltering and treating the mentally disturbed.

Bethlem had its origins in the time of the Crusades, when a London alderman, Simon FitzMary, founded a priory in 1247 in London dedicated to the Bishop of Bethlehem. Originally founded to support the Christian campaign against the infidels, by the 1380s Bethlem began to specialize in the care of the insane. Richly endowed by benefactors, Bethlem was frequently fought over by the Crown and the City for its revenues. Incarceration in the hospital as a form of political control was a convenient recourse of the authorities from the early 16th century onwards. Nathaniel Lee, a Jacobite playwright who was committed for criticizing the Glorious Revolution, put the politics of lunacy in a nutshell: "They said I was mad; and I said they were mad; damn them, they out-voted me."

In general, though, the City governors looked up lunatic vagabonds who threatened to do harm to themselves or others, or poor souls whose families could no longer cope at home. In 1548 there were only 20 inmates. By 1630, beginning to reflect a new spirit of the age, inmates started to be known as "patients" rather than as "prisoners."

Assessing Bethlem's reputation for staff brutality, the book concludes that principle and practice were often at odds. Elizabethan vagrancy acts advocated whipping the mad and sick, yet as early as 1646 Bethlem officers and servants were forbidden either to "give any blows" to the mad folk or even to use "any ill language" towards them. But Bethlem's administrative committee was



simply too detached from the day-to-day running of the hospital to stamp out abuses, a fact confirmed by contemporary visitors, who repeatedly castigated the brutality of staff. Public visiting is another of Bethlem's more infamous practices which gets reviewed in a new light in the book. The hospital attracted as many as 100 visitors a week at the height of its popularity.

In 1669, Samuel Pepys sent his cousin's children "to see Bedlam" as their first treat on an itinerary embracing shopping, dancing, dining, the theatre and Westminster Abbey. Eighteenth-century tourist guides to London called it "perfect Amusement." For Bethlem's governors, admitting paying visitors was a useful source of income. The authors also argue that visits relieved the boredom of patients and ensured that any abuses were identified, and addressed, by virtue of being kept in the public eye. With a change in public sensibilities and the ending of visiting in 1770, Bethlem's patients entered a period of isolation which coincided with the hospital falling behind in administrative and medical standards.

Criticized by the Lunatic Reform movement for its obsolete practices,

inhuman confinement, and inattentive medical staff, Bethlem was twice the subject of parliamentary review in the first half of the 19th century. Under its first resident physician-superintendent, William Hood, appointed in 1852, who was later to include Virginia Woolf among his private patients, Bethlem started to acquire a new reputation as a hospital rather than as an ill-governed, outmoded charitable madhouse for pauper lunatics.

In the early 20th century Bethlem exploited its freedom as a semi-private institution to pioneer advances in the treatment of mental illness. These included admitting voluntary patients, opening the first purely psychiatric outpatient department in London, and leading in the adoption of Freudian ideas and behavioral therapy. Ironically, the move from the hospital's last London site—now the home of the Imperial War Museum—to a semi-rural location in Kent in 1930 marked the beginning of its demise. The costs of building the new hospital meant that the out-patients' department in London had to close, just as out-patient clinics were being recognized as the best means of providing early treatment and of avoiding the stigma of

institutional care.

More importantly, the closure diminished Bethlem's reputation as a teaching hospital. It was dropped as a teaching hospital by the University of London in 1944. When Aneurin Bevan announced the nationalization of all mental institutions, and their endowments by the NHS, with the exception of teaching hospitals, which were to remain self-governing, Bethlem had to merge to survive. What the Maudsley lacked was space and endowments: Bethlem had both.

The history of the Joint Hospital since its inception in 1948 has been successful, although early on Bethlem had cause to complain of being the neglected partner. Now, Bethlem has become the centre for leading departments in alcoholism, drug dependency, geriatrics and inpatient psychotherapy. Although its name has now officially disappeared, dropped in the 1991 renaming of the Joint Hospital as The Maudsley, Bethlem's history is a fascinating study in the changing perceptions of mental illness.

Financial Times Syndication

Genetic pioneer says 300 year lifespan possible

By Martin Miller

IT'S A world where the Wright brothers could blast off in the space shuttle, or where George Washington could teach Bill Clinton the dangers of foreign entanglements.

More to the point, it's a world where you could live to be 250 years old. Maybe even 300.

This isn't the world of make-believe. It's the brave new world of human longevity that evolutionary biologist Michael Rose says is entirely possible.

"It's a matter of time and money," said Rose, a professor at the University of California, Irvine. "When it happens, it will change the way you, your children and your grandchildren live. And it's all sitting here, literally on my (lab) bench."

Traditionally, such fountain-of-youth claims have been the province of carnival hucksters, medical charlatans and incense-burning mystics. And perhaps because of this longtime association with the snake-oil peddlers of yesteryear, one expects more of a grand production upon hearing the news—something like an announcement from the Wizard of Oz.

But Rose, who certainly possesses his own flair for the dramatic, delivers his observation matter-of-factly as he goes about feeding his laboratory fruit flies a revolting cocktail of yeast, molasses, sugar and bananas.

Certainly to the public, and to many gerontologists, the 42-year-old professor's predictions about aging sound as likely as walking on water. While more people are living longer these days, the extreme range of human life has had an iron ceiling of about 120 years for hundreds, and probably thousands, of years.

"Michael is certainly reasonably well thought of. He's done a lot of very interesting work," said David Finkelstein, head of the pathobiology program at the National Institute of Aging. "But to many of us, some of his ideas sound a little crazy."

Among other well-respected scientists, however, Rose is no mad scientist. Rather, he's a bold and pioneering researcher who's arguably done more than anyone in the past two decades to push the idea of age post-ponement from science-fiction

toward scientific fact.

"He's clearly shown you can modify the aging process," said Caleb Finch, a neurobiologist at the University of Southern California who specializes in aging. "He's a brilliant theoretician and thinker with extraordinary gifts."

Twenty years ago, as a graduate student in genetics at the University of Sussex in England, Rose's considerable intellectual gifts told him that defying mortality was insane. His gifts, speaking in their usual candor, also informed him that his adviser, who wanted to test a new theory of aging that could unlock the mysteries of aging, must be on opium.

But his adviser's claims inspired Rose to develop his own experiments, which are now famous within evolutionary biology circles. Rose began with 200 fertilized female fruit flies and a drive to challenge the notion of a fixed maximum age. The idea was to breed fruit flies that outlived their cousins in hopes of increasing longevity.

Generation after generation was bred in this manner. Gradually, the specially-bred flies began to surpass their normal life span of about 60 days.

The implications were as exciting as they were provocative: Age may not have a ceiling after all. That is, if one life form can push past its maximum genetic age barrier, why not another—namely, humans?

For Rose, who was known to spend 21 hours straight in a lab, the breakthrough was intoxicating. He was permanently hooked.

"Science is my lifelong obsession," said Rose. "As scientists, we worry and we replicate. We worry some more, and we replicate some more. It can be a merciless existence."

Today, Rose's Steinhaus Hall lab is home to more than 50 students and anywhere from half a million to a million fruit flies.

Some 500 generations removed from their University of Sussex forebears, today's fruit flies are different from their ancestors in many ways, but the most important is they live at least twice as long.

Of course, selective breeding for "dinky organisms"—as Rose calls his fruit flies—is relatively simple, but it's obviously not an option for humans. So, what's

the value of this research for humans?

By calling into question the notion of an unalterable life span, the fruit fly research opened the door to the real possibility of extending human life. More answers may come from similar experiments already under way on mice, which are much closer to humans in terms of genes, cell types, organs and diseases. Modeled after Rose's fruit fly research, initial results show that mice are living longer, too, but it's still too early for researchers to draw any firm conclusions.

The knowledge gained from understanding the genetic differences between longer-lived and normal mice and flies will provide vital clues in human age research, scientists said. For instance, longer-lived species may produce more or less of a certain hormone or protein than normal-aged ones.

Should the biological clock of mice be successfully reset, as it appears it may eventually, the results stand an excellent chance of being duplicated in humans, Rose believes.

"It can be applied to humans. All that has to be done is to scale it up," said Rose, a regular contributor to some of the nation's most prestigious science journals. "It's like Goddard's small rockets leading to the Apollo space program."

When scaled up, longevity will probably come in the form of many daily pills or perhaps periodic IV infusions, said Rose. The medications might keep people physiologically in their mid-30s for 100 years or more by manipulating the genes that control aging, Rose added.

Given his manner of making a living, Rose's views on dying are surprising.

"A large fraction of people in my field never want to die," he said. "I'm not desperate to fight off my mortality. I'm quite happy to die under the right circumstances." But if the shadow of death isn't driving him, what is?

"Almost no one would ever give you an honest answer to that question, but I will," Rose said. "It's vanity."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Touring Prince Edward Island, the land of 'Anne of Green Gables'

By Ridgely Ochs

IF ANNE of Green Gables had been crossing the Confederation Bridge with us, she no doubt would have invested the moment with the appropriate amount of imaginative awe.

The nine-mile concrete bridge, which opened in May 1997 and links Canada's New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, is certainly an engineering marvel: It's reputed to be the longest continuous marine span in the world. The bridge has replaced Anne Shirley, the carrot-redheaded character from Lucy Maud Montgomery's books, as the icon you see on PEI license plates, and its opening is probably the biggest thing to happen to the island since the pigtailed orphan dubbed a plucky little pond "The Lake of Shining Waters" 91 years ago, when the novel was first published.

But the 10-minute drive on the bridge across Northumberland Strait between Cape Tormentine, New Brunswick, and Borden-Carleton, Prince Edward Island, was, for us weary and less enthusiastic souls, kind of disappointing. Perhaps it was the long, unrelenting day's drive from Portland, Maine, through a friendly but flat and uninteresting New Brunswick. Or perhaps it was the high concrete walls that prevented us from seeing the water on either side once we were on the bridge.

But never mind. Once we were on the island, we could easily imagine what Anne found so enchanting about Canada's smallest province.

About 140 miles long and four to 40 miles wide, the island sits, cradled in the armlike cove of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, like an innocent and, up to now, unprotected throwback to North America's rural heritage. Except for neat white clapboard houses, fishing boats and the occasional house, first vista was nothing but undulating fields of hay, barley and potatoes spread out before us to the shimmering sea.

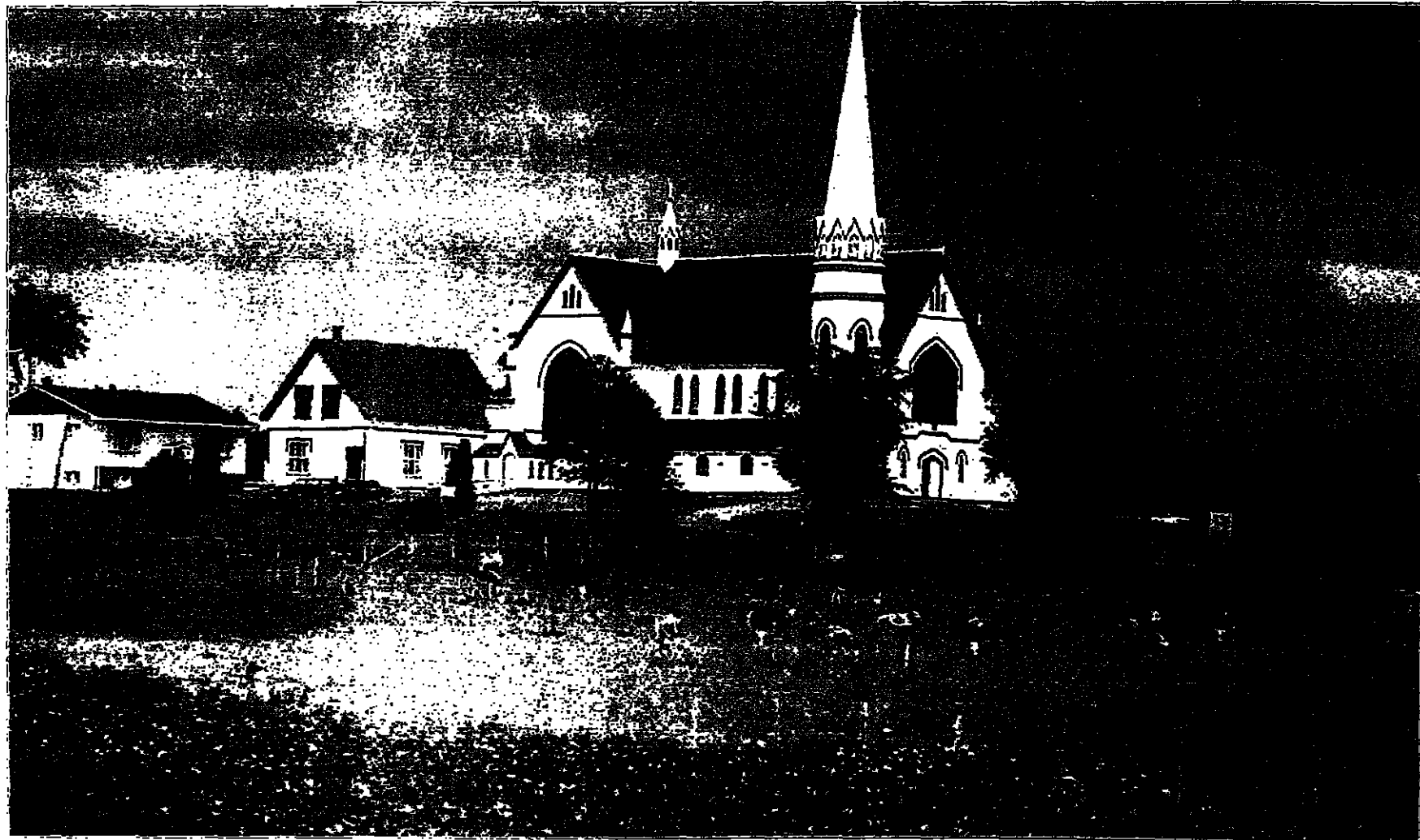
Much of this has been doubtless preserved by the fact that before the bridge, the ferry, which still operates between Carleton Place, Nova Scotia, and Wood Islands, Prince Edward Island, was the only way to

get on and off the island. Many of the 135,000 islanders, descendants of mostly British and some French farmers and seafarers, worried that the bridge would increase traffic, bring too many tourists and mean the end of their quiet way of life. Building the bridge—named after the confederation of Canadian provinces, which had its birth in 1864 in PEI's capital, Charlottetown—was the subject of many soul-searching articles and debates.

So far, although there appear to be some changes, the island is hardly turning into a congested metropolis. Frank Butler, chief of transportation operations for Prince Edward Island Tourism, said that from May to October 1997 (the latest available figures), tourism was up 54 percent over the previous year; many of these tourists were "day-trippers" from Nova Scotia or New Brunswick. And in addition to a Holiday Inn, the island now boasts a Sheraton. Nevertheless, Butler said, islanders are "sensitive to the landscape and the quiet style of life... We're selling a pace of life where you can forget your Day-Timer and cell phone."

Yes, indeed. Our first stop was the Keir's Shore Inn in Malpeque on the north shore. Although not far from Cavendish, a hot tourist spot because the house that inspired Green Gables is there, Malpeque is a quiet little village of comfortable houses and fishing shacks. Turning down a red-dirt road—all the land is red because of heavy iron oxide—we came upon a white clapboard farmhouse built in 1790 next to quiet Malpeque Bay. The house, once owned by a doctor who had been a close friend of Montgomery, has been elegantly restored with antiques by the owners, Steve Stratos and Colleen Bogdon, who moved to the island a few years ago from Toronto.

Although the sun hadn't yet set, Stratos sent us quickly about two miles down the road to a modest little diner before it closed for the evening—no late nights here. As we sat staring at a blazing sunset on the water across the road and scarfing down a really fresh, cheap seafood dinner, we noticed Stratos riding on his bicycle, checking to make sure we'd made it to the restaurant.



A rural scene in the Anne's Land section on the north shore of Prince Edward Island. photo by Tony Jerome

The mournful sound of loons woke us the next morning, and we ate an elegant breakfast that included fresh fruit garnished with nasturtiums grown in the garden. The kids were impressed but not quite ready to eat the flowers.

The rest of the morning was devoted to Anne. Although she is just a fictional character, she's hard to escape on the island: The north shore is known as Anne's Land; every gift shop has dozens of Anne dolls in every size, and her prettified, pigtailed face appears on everything, from salt shakers to sweatshirts.

My 10-year-old daughter had read several in the series of Anne books—Montgomery wrote eight that featured Anne and her family—and the rest of us had read or reread the original "Anne of Green Gables." Still, I found myself wondering why we were standing in this long line to see the farmhouse in Cavendish owned by Montgomery's elderly cousins that became Green Gables in the book. (Last year's fire damage has been repaired.)

Most of the visitors were elderly folks on a bus tour from Boston, and I was curious about what appealed to them in this character from a child's book. Now a national park, the house and grounds are based on descriptions in the novel, including furnishings from the 1890s.

The kids happily wandered through the fields and paths that inspired Montgomery and her character: As in the book, there's a "Lovers' Lane," a mellow path through a field that ends in overhanging boughs, Haunted Wood and even Dryad's Bubble, a chirpy little brook.

Earlier, we had visited the Anne of Green Gables Museum at Silver Bush, owned by Montgomery's aunt and uncle and the place where Montgomery was married. The homestead has the kind of worn-at-the-edges feel that probably was more typical of a turn-of-the-century colonial farmhouse than the national park site.

We then headed south for Charlottetown, less than an hour away. En route we stopped in New Glasgow and had lunch in a lovely, airy dining room at the Prince

Edward Island Preserve Co., overlooking the Clyde River. This was one of our more pleasant stops; we watched preserves being made and sampled wonderfully exotic teas.

Compared to the rest of the province, Charlottetown seems like the big city, although it has only about 15,000 people. We toured the renovated downtown and wharf area, as well as Province House: This is the place where delegates from the Canadian provinces, fearful that the United States would try to annex them in the midst of the American Civil War, first met to work toward their independence from Britain, which they were granted in 1867.

After another comfortable night at Keir's Shore Inn, we headed for Summerside on the south shore, where Anne goes to be a high school principal in a later book. In real life, it is the site of a theater and many festivals.

Victoria-by-the-Sea, east of Summerside, could be a great setting for a novel that calls for a charming, slightly down-at-

the-heels hamlet. We stayed at the comfortable Orient Hotel, where we had a lovely mid-afternoon tea at Mrs. Profit's Tea Shop.

Despite our fervid attempts to take in the sights on PEI, I realized at one point it was the lack of sights that was the most beguiling aspect of the place—the long placid views toward the water, the boats clanging in the small harbors, the roads never filled with cars.

One afternoon my daughter and I rented horses for a trail ride. The horses were pathetic, broken-down creatures, and I might have left before the ride if my husband and son hadn't already gone off with the car. But as we began the ride, skirting potato fields, down empty, red, dusty roads to the glorious sea, I couldn't help myself: I was happy.

As Anne says to her guardian: "Marilla, one can't stay sad very long in such an interesting world, can one?"

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

THE SICK & STAGNANT

Edited by Abdul Hamid Adnani

Juventus win casts shadow over Serie A title race

ROME—Inter Milan may have lost their hopes of a first Italian title since 1989 with Sunday's 1-0 defeat to league leaders Juventus, but the real loser was Italian football.

The nation's newspapers were unanimous in their conclusion that referee Piero Ceccarini's failure to award a penalty for a foul on Ronaldo was the latest in a series of mistakes that have favoured Juventus and dented the title race.

"With all respect for Juve, this will not go down in history as the cleanest of championships," said respected sports daily Gazzetta dello Sport in a front page editorial.

While the best-supported club in Italy starts to savour the taste of a 25th league title, cries of shame rise across the land in condemnation of another referee that lends a hand to Marcello Lippi's team.

Ceccarini not only waved play on after defender Mark Luliano blatantly body checked Ronaldo in the Juve area, but also chose to ignore Edgar Davids' kick at Diego Simeone. By contrast, Inter's Ze Elias was sent-off at the first opportunity. It was by no means the first time that controversial refereeing decisions have favoured Juventus this season.

Against Udinese in Turin last November, with the match delicately poised at 1-1, referee Graziano Cesari ruled that defender Ciro Ferraro had cleared a shot from German's Oliver Bierhoff before it crossed the line. Television evidence showed Cesari was mistaken, but the result, a 4-1 victory for Juventus, was allowed to stand.

Again in Turin, last January, with AS Roma trailing 2-1, Didier Deschamps clearly tripped Carmine Gaudio in the penalty area but the referee waved play on and Juve won. In Rome, against Lazio earlier this month, and deep into injury time with Juve winning 1-0, Luliano was seen to handle. Referee Pierluigi Collina said it was accidental.

Finally, last Sunday, in a close match at Empoli, Juventus were gifted another three points when referee Stefano Rodomonti ruled that goalkeeper Angelo Peruzzi stopped a late header on his line. Again, television proved him wrong.

Such errors might have passed unnoticed in other seasons, in which Juventus had



virtually wrapped up the title before Easter, but 1997-98 has provided the closest title race in years, with every point crucial. With just one point separating Inter and Juventus before Sunday's match and three matches now remaining, the result virtually settles the championship.



everything was at stake. A year of work, a career, said Inter manager Luigi Simoni, who was dismissed for only the second time in his career for protesting. "Ceccarini was the only person in the world not to have seen the penalty and how come that referee at Empoli did not see the ball cross the line. It's really very worrying."

One answer may lie in the way in which Italian referees are appointed for matches. Unlike other European countries, Serie A hand-picks its referees.

After Rodomonti's error against Empoli, it was discovered that the referee had directed only three Juventus

matches in three years after making a mistake that had cost the reigning champions a goal in a 1994 match. "It's fair to ask if Rodomonti was not conditioned by what happened to him in 1994. Perhaps he was afraid of repeating the same mistake and paying the consequences," said Giorgio Tosani, an Italian soccer commentator. "I have no choice but to believe that referees have a complex," said Inter president Massimo Moratti. "They don't do this on purpose. It's a habit. They are afraid of hurting Juventus. It's the rule, not an exception."

"There is a kind of virus that infects our referees: call it psychological slavery," added Gazzetta dello Sport.

However, Sunday's scapegoat Ceccarini brushed off the accusations. "For me, it was a straight forward match," he said. "Mistakes? We're all human, we all make errors."

Italian soccer fans have long claimed that Juventus, owned by the powerful Agnelli dynasty, hold a Machiavellian grip on the destiny of the Serie A championship. AS Roma might have won the 1980-81 title if a perfectly regular goal against Juventus in Turin had not been disallowed. Fiorentina fans still talk about the 1981-82 season, when Juventus won a league title at their expense on the last day of the season with a disputed penalty from Ireland's Liam Brady. Perhaps the most telling verdict on Sunday's showdown came from Ronaldo himself. "You all know that for me, football is about happiness, but only when it's 11 players against 11," he reflected. "When it's 11 against 12 it becomes sad."

And this season's other leading candidate and rehab who are going for broke on broken bones? Here are a few of them:

■ Rik Smits, Indiana: How sore are Rik Smits' sore feet? "I drive with cruise control as much as I can," says the Pacers 31-year-old big man. Smits had surgery before last season to repair compressed nerves in both feet. He missed 30 games; Indiana missed the playoffs. Now Smits is there. Inflamed scar tissue makes every step painful, but still he runs and jumps. "We're not going to win without him," says Reggie Miller. "I just want to win so badly." Smits added, "I know I gotta play for now."

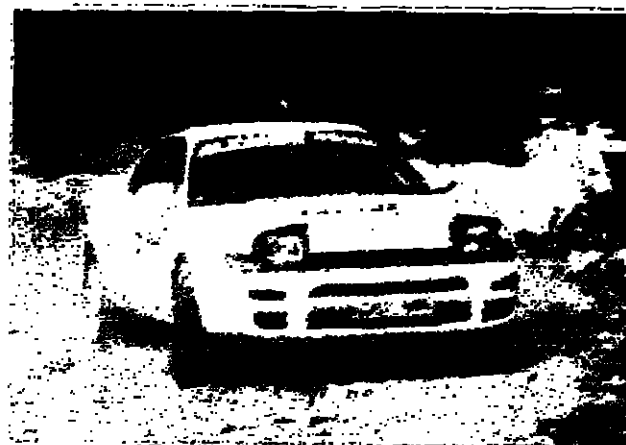
■ Nate McMillan, Seattle: Can't be the catalyst off the bench for the Sonics' defense anymore. He knows this when he wakes up and his right knee, the one with no cartilage is puffy and discolored. When the back pain flares and he sees the scalp scars on his ankles. When he considers his coming retirement and the arthritis on his way. No, George Karl's "favorite player of all time" and key locker room presence can't do what he used to. But he'll do what he can.

Belbesi on track in high speed race

AMMAN (Star)—The Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) continues its series of this season with the second speed rally sponsored by Pepsi.

Jordanian Champion Gaith Belbesi came in on top with a time of 2:22:36 minutes in the second round, the best time in the three-round race. The brothers Shadian—Khatshaf and Barkeiv—took the 2nd and 3rd places with times of 2:31:29 and 2:32:48 respectively.

The best time—2:24:74—was clocked by Yaser Jarar in the second round, but he was late for the race and his time was penalized, so he didn't place among the top finishers. The organizing committee penalized Jarar by adding ten seconds to his total time.



which dropped him back to eighth place. The race was patronized by HRH Prince Faisal Bin Al Hassan the head of the upper

committee of the car sport. A mix of 23 experienced drivers and the newcomers participated in the race. ■

Playoffs brim with end of season pain

THESE ARE the legends. A rheumy-eyed Jordan pours in 38 against the Jazz. Brutal flu brushed away like a half-hearted hand check. Willis Reed, stumpy leg and all, pushes the Knicks to a title in Game 7 of the '70 Finals. New York will always remember Isiah Thomas leads the 88 Pistons to the NBA title while playing on an ankle so badly sprained, it will take the entire summer to recover. His teammates inspired. Zeke leads the Bad Boys to the next two titles.

Playoffs in pain. Excruciating pain. There have always martyrs to the cause. The walking wounded, once invincible Bill Walton. Kevin McHale. Scottie Pippen. This year's man-of-the-hour in great pain, leading his team to a championship in spite of all, just might be Lakers guard Nick Van Exel.

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■ Nate McMillan, Seattle: Can't be the catalyst

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■ Jayson Williams, New Jersey: The cast came off a few weeks early—ain't no broken thumb gonna keep Jayson Williams off the postseason boards. "The bone is healing," he insists. "It's starting to get some callous around it." You could say the same about Jayson. "If it breaks, it breaks."

Never mind that the Nets are a No. 8 seed. "I haven't been in the playoffs in a long time," says the 30-year-old free agent. And when that thumb starts the throbs? "I'll run water on it."

■ Luc Longley, Chicago: "The worst part about sitting around," says Luc Longley, "is the longer you sit, the less you feel like part of the team." Longley will be sitting for much of the opening round. A left knee, hyperextension and other leg injuries ended his best season six weeks early. Since then, the 7'2" center has been swimming and working on the stationary bike and looking down the road. "Alonzo [Mourning] is always a matchup that you need a bulldozer to handle," he says. "That's the one I need to be around for."

■ Nate McMillan, Seattle: Can't be the catalyst



MONDIAL NEWS

US for real, publication warns

FRANKFURT, Germany—Watch out for the Americans! The mass-circulation newspaper Bild, with the largest readership in Germany, warned that the United States will not be a pushover at the World Cup in France. The U.S. team is Germany's first opponent, June 15 in Paris. The Americans beat Austria 3-0 last Wednesday in Vienna.

"Watch out, Bert! Group F is stronger than we all thought," Bild wrote, referring to Germany coach Bert Vogts. "The Americans presented themselves very strongly," Bild said, and praised midfielder Claudio Reyna as "excellent." Reyna plays for Wolfsburg in the Bundesliga.

Olsen pleased with Norway's victory over Belgium

Oslo, Norway—Norwegian coach Egil Olsen said his team's 2-0 win at Denmark this week may be an even bigger achievement than Norway's stunning 4-2 defeat of World Cup champion Brazil last May. "The results were among the best we have ever done," Olsen told the Oslo newspaper Dagbladet, upon returning home after Wednesday's game in Copenhagen. "Maybe even better than the victory over Brazil." He said the Brazilians had been tired after their trip to Oslo, were playing on the Norwegians' home field, and underestimated this small Nordic country's team.

"The Danes didn't do that," Olsen was quoted as saying in Friday's editions of the newspaper. The Danes hadn't lost a home game since September 1992, and this was the first time in 27 years the Norwegians managed to win at Denmark.

Don't blame Troussier

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa—Don't blame new soccer coach Philippe Troussier for lack of effort or imagination if South Africa does poorly at its first World Cup. Troussier, according to The Star newspaper, recently took part in a traditional African cleansing ritual that involved dipping his hands in the blood of a slaughtered goat. The ceremony was supervised by a sangoma, or traditional healer.

Troussier, a Frenchman, has worked throughout Africa, most recently as coach of Burkina Faso, and is known as the "white witch doctor." He said he knows how to work with the players as their coach and spiritual adviser, and he declined hiring a sports psychologist for the team. "I am their sports psychologist," Troussier said.

Listen always to the Father

MILAN, Italy—For Italy's soccer team, father really does know best. Coach Cesare Maldini has long made a point of encouraging his son, Paolo, to make attacking runs up the left flank from his position as defender. The strategy has produced results, with Paolo scoring at a much faster clip. The AC Milan veteran headed in the first goal after four minutes Wednesday night, sparking Italy to a 3-1 victory over Paraguay.

After scoring three goals in 40 national team games under coach Arrigo Sacchi, Paolo needed just 13 games to match that total since Cesare took over the Azzurri in 1996. And he tallied five goals in just 12 games in the 1980s, when his father headed Italy's Under-21 team.

Matthaeus wants Germany recall

MUNICH, Germany—Lothar Matthaeus, who led Germany to its last World Cup title in 1990, is recommending himself to German coach Bert Vogts for this summer's championship, following an injury to Olaf Thon. He has the support of several coaches. But Vogts looks unlikely to change his mind and bring back the 37-year-old Matthaeus.

Vogts dropped Matthaeus from the team before the 1996 European Championships, after Matthaeus had criticized several national team members, particularly striker Juergen Klinsmann.

"It happened two years ago," Matthaeus said. "We've talked it over. We shouldn't look back, we should look ahead. 'I can't do any more than offer myself repeatedly.' Matthaeus said after a strong performance in a 2-1 win over Bayern Munich. Thon tore a ligament in his right ankle in a Bundesliga game and will be sidelined for two weeks. His club doctor said Thon's injury should not keep him out of the World Cup.

France officials unveil forge-less tickets

PARIS—World Cup officials have unveiled an example of the highly-sought tickets for the World Cup, and they claim they're impossible to forge. A ticket, printed by the company that supplies bank note paper to 120 countries worldwide, is a thick piece of blue and yellow rectangular paper.

Co-organizer Michel Platini said counterfeiters would be foiled by a special "lock" mechanism in the ticket, which also is featured in the country's state-of-the-art bank notes.

The tickets depict the earth surrounded by nine soccer balls, evoking planets in the galaxy. They also feature a watermark of "Footix," the event mascot, layers of iridescent color impossible to photocopy, a hologram of France and the World Cup trophy, on a special non-shiny paper. The tickets also bear the purchaser's name.

Baggio in top form

BRESCIA, Italy—If Roberto Baggio wants his World Cup place back, he's doing it the right way. The veteran playmaker, making a late push to earn a berth on Italy's World Cup roster, scored twice in Bologna's 3-1 win at Brescia with national coach Cesare Maldini in the stands. "I had no idea the was there," Baggio said. "Maybe that's why I played so well." Baggio led runner-up Italy to the final at the 1994 World Cup with five goals in three matches. But he's played only one national team match since 1995, and is battling two or three other players for one reserve forward spot in this summer's tournament.

Hoddle threatens suit against Geller

LONDON—Faith healer Eileen Drewery remains on England's World Cup backup team. But coach Glenn Hoddle is threatening legal action against psychic Uri Geller, who's trying to help out too. Hoddle has great faith in Drewery, who has worked with several of England's injury-prone players. But he doesn't think he needs help from Geller.

Geller, an Israeli who is a big fan of England, boasts that he smuggled the World Cup trophy to his home to energize it in England's favor. He also said he sprinkled crystals on the playing surface at Marseille where Hoddle's team plays its first World Cup game against Tunisia.

After reading a newspaper report that Hoddle and Drewery visited Geller two years ago and took part in some kind of healing process, the England coach issued a statement saying the meeting never took place. He said the report was "an extraordinary combination of lies, inaccuracies, exaggerations and misleading innuendoes," and he was taking legal advice with the possibility of suing Geller and the newspaper.

Terrific at both ends, but weak in the middle Modest German squad still top contender

STUTTGART, Germany—Germany prepares for another World Cup title run no longer unbeaten but still upbeat: A 2-1 loss to defending champion Brazil in an exhibition last month ended Germany's run of 22 games without defeat, a series that included the 1996 European title.

While a win over an opponent ranked No. 1 in the world would have been great for the team that opens Cup play against the United States June 15 in Paris, German coach Bert Vogts said he was pleased with what he saw from his veteran squad. "We played man-to-man against the best forwards in the world," Vogts said.

"We made some mistakes and we know it, but I think we are heading in the right direction." Germany was two minutes away from a draw against Brazil. Only a brilliant move began by Roberto Carlos and finished by Ronaldo prevented the Germans from carrying the result they felt should have been theirs and adding to their history that includes three World Cup titles and a reputation as a team that no one in the world likes to play.

For Vogts, the games against Brazil and Olympic champion Nigeria Wednesday were the two major tests before the World Cup.

"I wanted to have such strong rivals," he said. "These are the only two games where I can test my players." The remaining three games before the World Cup, against Finland, Colombia and Liechtenstein, will be used to fine-tune the 22-member squad, expected to be announced after



the Nigeria game. Vogts likes to pick his squad early, to avoid any unsettling debate in the media over who should go and who should be left at home.

So far, the 51-year-old coach has confirmed only one name: Andreas Koepke, who will be his No. 1 goalkeeper. Koepke, 36, is one of the veterans on Vogts' team and plays for Olympique Marseille in France. Vogts says he will take three goalies to France.

Germany sticks to the more cautious 5-3-2 system, with two central defenders and a sweeper, plus two men on the flanks, whose first job is to

close the lanes but also to run into attack whenever possible. One playmaker, two more midfielders and two strikers complete the lineup.

One of the central defenders is sure to be 32-year-old Jurgen Kohler, one of the toughest markers in Europe. He was sent off after 35 minutes against Brazil for a foul Vogts called "stupid." While hard jacking is not uncommon in the Bundesliga, Vogts knows that the refereeing will be much stricter at the World Cup and he wants to avoid unnecessary yellow and red cards.

Christian Werners, by no means outstanding in previous

national team games, neutralized Ronaldo until his late strike. Romario, Brazil's other forward, started hardly touched the ball, marked out of the game by Kohler and Thomas Helmer.

Olaf Thon probably will open at sweeper, barring a miraculous return of Matthias Sammer. Thon, who will be 32 at the time of the World Cup, is short but skilled with the ball and at reading the game. He can also move forward and execute free kicks.

Sammer was Germany's star at Euro 96 but is recovering from a fifth knee operation and has not even resumed jogging.

Germany has problems in the midfield. Andreas Moeller had some good moments against Brazil. But he has rarely lived up to expectations in the national team and he lost the ball that resulted in Brazil's winner.

Thomas Haessler seems to be on the decline and did not even play against Brazil. Vogts is unlikely to opt for two offensive midfielders.

"We conceded too many goals in qualifying," he said. "We again paid the price against Brazil. We don't recover quickly enough when we go forward."

Up front, Vogts has the lux-

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Le palais d'Amman, curiosité omeyyade à deux coupoles par Véronique Abu-Nijmeh

L'intérêt des vestiges de l'époque musulmane est trop souvent éclipsé par la notoriété des antiques cités de la Décapole ou la Nabatéenne. Néanmoins, grâce aux travaux de la Mission archéologique espagnole, le palais omeyyade d'Amman (voir ci-contre) dont la grande coupole a été récemment reconstituée, saura sans doute retenir l'attention du public. Ce complexe est l'héritier des immenses palais de Mésopotamie et de Perse, véritables cités comprenant entrées monumentales, places dégagées, rues et unités d'habitation. Dans des dimensions plus modestes, le palais d'Amman s'inspire de ce modèle : une rue à colonnades relie deux bâtiments surmontés de coupoles. De part et d'autre sont réparties six unités d'habitation (bayt), avec chacune une cour autour de laquelle s'organise un ensemble de pièces dont la principale est ouverte (l'ivan). Cette structure d'origine parthes a été pleinement développée dans l'architecture des palais de l'Iran sassanide. Les deux espaces principaux du palais sont des halls de plan



cruciforme, l'un servant d'entrée et de salle d'audience, le second, plus privé, de salle de trône. Alors que les coupoles à plan carré sont empruntées à l'architecture sassanide, le plan cruciforme tire son origine des constructions romano-byzantines. Indiscutablement, cette forme s'est utilisée dans le registre civil ou religieux, cette forme s'est largement répandue en Orient, surtout en Syrie. Le palais d'Amman est un élément important dans le développement de l'art musulman, en considération non seulement de l'époque de sa construction (milieu du VIII^e siècle ap. J. C.) qui correspond à l'apogée de l'empire omeyyade, mais aussi de sa position stratégique sur un point de passage. Il innove aussi : pour la première fois, un tel complexe comporte deux coupoles, une particulièrement élevée ultérieurement dans l'architecture des mosquées du monde musulman occidental, comme on le voit à Qairawan en Tunisie ou Cordoue en Espagne.

Nouvelles du Pays

Les 30 ans de la JTV

Le bon vieux temps de la télé de papa !

Lancement d'une troisième chaîne publique. La télévision jordanienne fêtait cette semaine en fanfare son 30^e anniversaire. Quelques-uns de ses pionniers sont revenus sur le petit écran évoquer leurs débuts. Parmi eux, Munib Toukan, ex-présentateur du journal en anglais, regrette le professionnalisme et la détermination de cette époque créatrice.

«Bonsoir, les canaux 6. Voici les actualités». C'est ainsi que Munib Toukan, présentateur du journal télévisé en anglais des années 70, commençait chaque soir la retransmission. Captivé sur le sixième canal de la télé, l'actuelle deuxième chaîne était connue sous le doux nom de «sixième canal» et réunissait des émissions en anglais et en hébreu !

«La création de cette chaîne, une année après la fondation de la télévision jordanienne (Jordan Television, JTV), a eu un succès immédiat», affirme Munib Toukan, aujourd'hui responsable des relations publiques de la compagnie américaine Royal Jordanian. «Tout le monde la regardait : la communauté des expatriés et même les Israéliens, avec qui on était en guerre», raconte-t-il en allumant sa pipe.

«Un téléspectateur fidèle des informations en anglais, Sa Majesté le Roi Hussein, nous a beaucoup soutenus et encouragés», continue celui qui a accompagné le souverain hachémite pendant trois ans dans ses visites officielles autour du monde. Avec une équipe de vrais professionnels formés dans des prestigieuses universités étrangères, la toute jeune télévision jordanienne a en effet représenté un souffle nouveau sur la région. «À l'époque, notre télévision a contribué à la création de la télévision syrienne et de plusieurs stations du Golfe, mais aujourd'hui on est dépassé par certaines d'entre elles et on a de la peine à résister».

Selon cet ex-reporter, qui a étudié le journalisme à Paris et travaillé pendant sept ans à la

télévision française, il est beaucoup plus difficile pour la JTV de s'en sortir avec l'arrivée du satellite et la paix avec Israël. «Dans ce contexte, pour être viable, l'information doit être extrêmement transparente, sûre et crédible», souligne Munib Toukan d'une voix égale, et pour ça, il faut plus de professionnalisme et moins de protocole».

NBC, TV5

L'ancien présentateur entend par là une solide formation et une vaste culture générale, aussi bien pour les caméraman et les rédacteurs que pour les scénaristes et les réalisateurs. A cela, s'ajoute l'esprit critique nécessaire pour une juste sélection et organisation de l'info. «Malheureusement, les actualités en anglais de l'actuelle deuxième chaîne donnent l'impression d'être une traduction approximative des informations en arabe», poursuit-il, en invoquant l'initiative et le pouvoir de décision d'antan.

«La télévision jordanienne se débrouille bien mais sans peine, car ses ressources sont limitées», admet Munib Toukan. «L'autonomie financière et administrative (mais elle reste aux mains de l'État, bien sûr, M.D.R.) obtenue, il y a six mois, est un bon signe pour l'avenir», signale-t-il sur un ton plus optimiste. Reste qu'une des priorités de la télé, devrait être, selon lui, la perfectionnement de son personnel : «Il faut les envoyer en plus grand nombre faire des stages à la BBC, à CNN, etc., et profiter des bourses offertes par les pays occidentaux».

Grâce aux progrès techniques, la présentation de



Les premiers montages : presque de l'artisanat !

L'information est devenue plus facile et plus séduisante. Faire le journal depuis la Maison

Blanche ou les différents palais royaux dans le monde relevait souvent de l'aventure : «Les

d'annoncer le contenu des images à transmettre.

Les Français regardent trop le petit écran

Au début des années 80, la plupart des téléspectateurs s'étaient félicités de la disparition du monopole audiovisuel de l'État, synonyme d'un plus grand nombre de chaînes et d'une plus grande indépendance de chacune d'elles. Mais les sondages montrent qu'ils sont assez peu satisfaits des programmes qui leur sont proposés : fin 1993, 66% se désolaient d'accéder avec l'affirmation selon laquelle «on est pris pour des abrutis à la télé», une proportion croissante depuis 1986 (36%). Les plus traditionnels s'alarment de l'invasion de la publicité et de l'aspect «raconteur» de certaines émissions de variétés. D'autres, moins nombreux, regrettent le conformisme, le manque d'imagination et la pauvreté cul-

tuelle des programmes, aussi bien dans le choix des sujets que dans le ton et le style utilisés. Pourtant l'offre s'est fortement élargie depuis 1980. Les chaînes de télé sont, maintenant, au nombre de six (contre trois, il y a 18 ans) : deux chaînes de service public (sociétés nationales) France 2 et France 3 et trois chaînes privées, TF1, Canal Plus (cryptée et payante) et M6. La dernière chaîne, Arte, diffusée sur le cinquième canal, est une chaîne culturelle franco-allemande. Depuis décembre 1994, sur le même canal, sont programmées les émissions de la Cinquième qui est une chaîne éducative. Au-delà de cette palette berrizienne traditionnelle, les Français ont aussi la possibilité d'accéder à d'autres chaînes par

l'intermédiaire du satellite ou du câble (plus de 2 millions de foyers).

Malgré les nombreuses critiques à son encontre, la télévision reste le principal loisir du Français moyen qui passe plus de temps devant le petit écran qu'à travailler. La durée moyenne d'écoute par personne, plus de 3 heures par jour, représente donc l'essentiel du temps libre.

En 1950, une poignée de privilégiés était équipée de «l'étrange lucarne» et pouvait suivre quelques émissions expérimentales. Aujourd'hui, la quasi-totalité des ménages dispose d'au moins un téléviseur et plus du tiers estime qu'ils ressentiraient un sentiment de vide si on leur retirait leur poste. La dépendance n'est pas loin.

Anca de Maio

Culture

Cinéma du froid fait chaud au cœur

Demain, s'achève la semaine du film scandinave pour les enfants. Une curiosité dans cette région inondée par les productions hollywoodiennes. Un enchantement pour les jeunes Jordaniens qui découvraient un cinéma fait pour eux.

«Ce festival est une manière de faire connaître la civilisation scandinave», explique simplement Agneta Bohman, l'ambassadrice de Suède devenue porte-parole de la communauté nordique, le temps de cette première semaine du cinéma scandinave en Jordanie. L'idée, cependant, est ancienne. Déjà en 1976, la Suède avait organisé un séminaire de littérature enfantine à Amman. Mais depuis, à part des échanges avec des libraires et des auteurs jordaniens, rien de très consistant. En réalité, cette semaine cinématographique marque la première initiative collective (Suède, Finlande, Norvège, Danemark, Islande) et médiatique destinée à mettre en avant une culture



«Les héros sont des enfants, comme je l'ai toujours souhaité». Une jeune Jordanienne de 14 ans pendant la semaine du film scandinave.

discrète jusqu'à présent dans le paysage hachémite. Très développée dans ces pays du froid, le

cinéma pour enfants a ensuite été choisi pour permettre la découverte, judicieuse, dans un royaume où les enfants sont gavés de séries et super productions américaines, souvent violentes. Cette fois, ils ont eu le bonheur de visionner des films qui parlent d'eux et les prennent au sérieux. «Les héros sont des enfants, comme je l'ai toujours souhaité», se réjouit une adolescente de 14 ans. Il est en effet plus facile de s'identifier à des personnages qui ont le même âge que vous et de se prendre pour Pelle, le conquérant, victorieux face au monstre ingrat des adultes. En outre, les films sélectionnés ont dévoilé les modes de vie et l'histoire de contrées presque toujours inconnues des jeunes Jordaniens. Ahmad, 10 ans, s'est dit décidé à en savoir plus sur la Suède, après avoir vu The Brothers Lionheart, où deux frères sans peur et sans reproche combattent des serpents et des dragons.

Lutte entre le bien et le mal, passage de l'enfance à l'âge adulte, relation entre filles et garçons, rêve d'un monde exclusif de camaraderie, les thèmes traités sont généraux.

Tout au long de la semaine, les enfants d'Amman se sont amusés à adapter cette culture exotique à leur propre imagination et ce, malgré la barrière de la langue. Les films étaient sous-titrés seulement en anglais. Scandinave ou Jordanien, un enfant reste un enfant avec ses doutes et ses ambitions : devenir un adulte et surtout quel- qu'un d'utile. ■

Nasrine A. Sheikh

Dernières journées du festival du film scandinave au Centre culturel royal.

Jeudi 30 avril
11h00
Dag Thieves (Finlande)
16h30
Benjamin Dove (Islande)
19h00
The Brothers Lionheart (Suède)
Vendredi 1^{er} mai
11h00
Carl and the Angels (Norvège)
16h30
Nature's Warriors (Suède)
19h00
Whitebear King Valermin (Norvège)
Films sous-titrés en anglais.
Renseignements au 5661026.
Entrée libre.

Fait divers

Pour la (chère) liquette du King

Le Hard Rock Café, à Abdoun, vient de vivre une histoire cocasse. Un jeune Britannique a essayé de piquer quelques souvenirs après consommation. Coffré presque par hasard, il s'est retrouvé en cabane pour des frites. Mais quelles frites !

Mardi 14 avril, 12h30.

Les reliques des stars du show-biz vous donnent l'eau à la bouche. Le Hard Rock Café les expose sans pudeur à tous les curieux de passage.

Parmi eux, ce jour-là, un gars qui ne paie pas de mine, fagoté comme un potache, tee-shirt gris en «v», pompes Reebok, jean délavé mais pas de casquette. L'allure est méditerranéenne, le cheveu court, la risette, celle d'un bébé et l'anglais, sans accent. Comme beaucoup de visiteurs du Hard Rock Café, il observe les memorabilia, comme on dit là-bas, ces objets-souvenirs affichés à l'intérieur de vitrines. Il passe la place au poigne fin avant de papoter avec les hôtes. Ensemble, ils parlent de choses et d'autres : lui semble passer du coq à l'âne mais en réalité, il a déjà une idée derrière la tête et pose ici et là des questions précises sur bro- liques et les bouts de tissus qui l'entourent : quels sont les mieux assurés, les plus chers, les plus célèbres ? Le temps d'un café et le tascard se tire.

«Pour nous, c'était un client comme les autres», se défendent plus tard les hôtesse naïves.

Mardi, 23h00.

Le trouble-fête revient sur les lieux de ce qui n'a pas encore été son crime. Il réclame une place en vue des objets de son désir et relait un tour du propriétaire. Discret, cette fois, le jeune homme se fait moins prolix, histoire de se faire oublier. Le bougre y réussit tellement bien que les hôtesse, occupées à se trémousser pour faire monter la mousse, ne l'ont pas vu partir sans payer et aller

se réfugier à l'étage supérieur dans une pièce encore en restauration derrière la grosse Harley. Le gaillard planque en attendant son heure.

Mercredi, 23h30.

La ville dort sur ses deux oreilles et le Hard Rock est fermé depuis belle lurette. Les trois sont là à portée de main. D'attaque, la fouine sort de son terrier et à pas de loup se glisse près des vitrines chéries. La nuitette de Gloria Estefan tombe dans ses bras sans résistance puis il subtilise en orfèvre la chemise du King. Il récupère aussitôt le pendentif de Jimmy Hendrix mais cette fois dans un bruit de vaisselle cassée. A l'extérieur, le silence de la nuit est brisé. Les gardiens sursautent et sentent que quelque chose ne tourne pas rond dans cette ronde. Courageux mais pas téméraires, ils pénètrent dans le sanctuaire.

Rien à signaler. L'Arsène Lupin a filé à l'anglaise, sa cueillette sous le bras. En trois enjambées, il a rejoint le parking désert en direction du point d'Abdoun. Ni vu ni connu.

Mais la police a l'œil. Une patrouille de nuit repère l'individu au hasard de sa tournée rituelle. Le voleur pensait s'en être tiré. Rattrapé par la malchance, il bredouille deux ou trois explications qui ne tiennent pas debout. Insuffisant. Les flics l'embarquent et le coffrent pour le reste de la nuit.

Mercredi, 10h00.

La disparition de la relique d'Elvis - un des clous de l'exposition septennale - n'est pas une blague et le torchon brûle entre les gardiens pénaux et les tenanciers. Les flics arrivés sur les lieux du drame enregistrent les dépositions des uns et

des autres : rien de bien fameux pour se mettre en chasse.

Mercredi, 21h00.

La force publique informe le Hard Rock Café que le voleur a été arrêté et son butin récupéré. Ce Britannique d'origine jordanienne a été cueilli chez lui. Alors qu'il avait été libéré le matin même par l'équipe de nuit, les enquêteurs du jour ont rapidement fait le rapprochement entre le vagabond d'Abdoun et le reculeur de frites. Preuve que l'information circule dans la police.

Epilogue.

Cette histoire a mis de l'huile sur le feu entre les gérants et les employés. Les premiers rejettent la responsabilité sur les seconds mais il faut bien avouer que les bâtiments du Hard Rock Café manquent cruellement d'un système de sécurité performant.

d'alarme pour les bijoux exposés, pas de caméras... Un comble quand on sait que la moindre habitude encadrée peut être revendue plus de 1000 JD sur le marché. L'ensemble des memorabilia est assuré pour plus de trois millions de francs et la seule chemise d'Elvis pour 420.000 francs.

Le Briton s'en est bien tiré puisqu'il a lieu d'un long séjour dans les cellules jordanien, il a finalement été expulsé du royaume.

Moralité : il ne faut pas réveiller la liquette d'un King qui dort, paix. ■

Abdallah Shadid



Le Hard Rock Café abrite plusieurs reliques de stars. Le tout est assuré pour plus de 3 millions de francs.

C'est la vie

L'agenda culturel d'Amman

Cinéma

Cycle consacré à l'actrice Catherine Deneuve. Le sauvagement, film de Jean-Paul Rappeneau, 1975, couleur, sous-titré en arabe. Un misanthrope voit une ravissante écrivaine tomber dans ses bras. Lundi 4 mai à 18h30 et 20h30. Renseignements au 4636445 ou 4637009.



Elle est l'une des actrices les plus distinguées du cinéma français ; par le choix de ses rôles, elle a su mettre en valeur tous les registres de son talent et passe sans transition de la petite fille modèle à la grande bourgeoise ou à l'héroïne romantique.

Forbidden love of sheer indulgence Chocolate Obsession

By Vanessa Houlder

CHOCOLATE IS one of the most compulsive of everyday pleasures. It is not merely delicious; it is also mildly addictive. Two out of five women and more than one in 10 men admit to intense cravings for chocolate, according to a recent Canadian study.

So what is it about chocolate that makes it so compelling? The explanation is not fully understood, but seems to draw on elements of taste, chemistry and psychology.

Its taste, one might imagine, can explain a lot. It is rich, creamy and delicious. Moreover, chocolate, like wine, has a complex range of flavours and aromas which develop during the fermentation and roasting of the cocoa bean and surrounding pulp.

Savouring a piece of good quality chocolate is a delectable experience. Not only is there a perfect balance between sweetness and bitterness, but careful analysis reveals subtle flavours including fruit, wine, sherry, caramel, flowers, tea, almonds, butter and even cheese.

Its texture is also unique. Cocoa butter—the fat that occurs naturally in cocoa beans—gives chocolate its distinctive smoothness and its ability to melt at mouth temperature. It absorbs heat from the lining of the mouth, slowly releasing the rich chocolate flavour as it melts.

But analyzing the subtleties of the taste and texture of chocolate may be missing the point. Some experts think that explanation of chocolate's appeal goes beyond the simple pleasure of eating it. In explaining why people get so hooked on chocolate, they look to ingredients that subtly influence the chemistry of the brain.

The addictive power of chocolate could lie with one or more of the 300 chemicals detected in it. There is little caffeine, but the main stimulant is a similar chemical, theobromine, named after the cacao tree, whose botanical name Theobroma is Latin for "food of the gods."

Another intriguing substance in chocolate is phenylethylamine, of which there can be up to 0.7 gram in a 100 gram bar. This chemical, which has a fish-like smell when concentrated, has been shown to raise blood pressure, producing a heightened sensation and a feeling of well-being.

Recent research has unearthed yet another set of chemicals that could explain the appeal. Researchers at the Neuroscience Institute in San Diego discovered a group of chemicals in chocolate which may appeal to the same part of the brain as does cannabis. It is not yet clear, however, whether these chemicals have any effect at the tiny concentrations in which they are found.

Some researchers are convinced that such chemicals hold the key to explaining chocolate's appeal.

Yet a simple experiment recently conducted

by Paul Rosen, a professor in the department of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, suggests the real explanation lies elsewhere. He constructed an experiment for a group of undergraduates and their parents who experienced chocolate cravings. When they had the craving, they were asked to open a box, eat its contents and 90 minutes later, re-rate the craving.

Unsurprisingly, when there was nothing in the box, people opening the box continued to feel unsatisfied. Equally unsurprisingly, if there was a chocolate bar in the box, the cravings disappeared.

The most striking results emerged when the testers were given capsules that contained cocoa power, which gave them all the chemicals normally found in chocolate but none of the taste. This did not relieve their cravings at all.

There was another intriguing result when the testers were given a box containing white chocolate. Strictly speaking, white chocolate is not really "chocolate" because it contains none of the solids other than cocoa butter. It does not have the aroma or chemicals of chocolate, but, significantly, it has the same texture and "melt-in-the-mouth" property.

The white chocolate satisfied about half of people's cravings. Adding the capsules containing the chemicals did not make any difference to how they rated the craving.

The conclusion drawn by the researchers was that the allure of chocolate had little to do with its pharmacological properties.

But if it is not the chemistry that makes chocolate so attractive, could it be psychological? Some psychologists argue that we turn to chocolate for comfort because we associate it with treats in our early life.

Another theory is that we crave chocolate largely because we feel guilty about eating it. We feel under pressure to eat chocolate with restraint, if at all.

This may sound far-fetched. But consider these statistics cited by Rosen about people's attitudes to chocolate.

Over half of US citizens surveyed considered a diet with a portion of chocolate pudding every day was less healthy than the same with vanilla pudding. A quarter of US college women said that far was one of the first three words they think about when they think of chocolate. One in five women in Philadelphia said they are embarrassed to buy chocolate in a shop.

This perception of chocolate is summed up by Rosen as being "both yummy and bad."

When taken to excess, it would be hard to argue with this assessment.

Having sorted chocolate, the next task is to unravel the compelling attraction of guilt. Did Freud eat chocolate?

Financial Times Syndication

Tough attitude of macho barfly loses friends for hot new script

By Patrick Goldstein

HOLLYWOOD—There's nothing like being the hot new kid in town. Just ask Troy Duffy. A year ago, he was a Hollywood phenom. He made headlines in the trade papers and was profiled in USA Today and the Washington Post after signing an unprecedented multimillion-dollar deal with Miramax Films to write and direct his first screenplay, "Boondock Saints."

It was an irresistible rags-to-riches story. A scruffy 26-year-old college dropout, Duffy had been working as a bartender. He'd never written or, for that matter, ever read a script before, perhaps because he was too busy getting into tummy rumbles with his brother Taylor, his partner in a rock band called the Brood.

But in March 1997, Duffy was flying high. TV news crews filmed him drawing beer at J. Sloats, the landmark West Hollywood bar that Harvey Weinstein promised to buy for him after the Miramax co-chairman waded into Sloats one night, joining Duffy and his pals over a pitcher of beer. Before the Miramax deal was even done, Duffy signed a two-picture, \$500,000 script deal with Paramount Pictures.

On the talent-agent circuit, word was that "Boondock Saints" was hot. Everyone wanted to act in the saga of two brawling South Boston fraternal twins who seemed like larger-than-life versions of Duffy and his younger brother.

Brad Pitt supposedly was interested in playing one of the brothers, as was Matt Damon. Ewan McGregor and Mark Wahlberg had loved the script and wanted a part. Kenneth Branagh was eager to play an older cop character in the film.

Much of the heat was generated by Miramax, which pulled out all the stops in its pursuit of the project. Weinstein paid Duffy more than \$600,000 for the script and agreed to let him direct the film. Weinstein also gave Duffy cast approval and a \$15-million budget.

A year later, some of the helium has gone out of the balloon. Miramax never made the movie, quietly shelving the script late last year. Weinstein's offer to buy the bar also evaporated.



Troy Duffy, a young, brash screenwriter as fast with fists as he is with words, has collided head-on with Hollywood's fickle nature. photo by Bob Carey

In fact, Duffy can't even go into Sloats anymore. He got into a fight at the bar in January, was kicked out and was asked by management not to come back.

"The whole experience was surreal," Duffy says, nursing an orange juice over lunch instead of his preferred drink—a shot of Bushmill's with a screwdriver chaser. "But it wasn't as magical as everybody would have you believe. People start talking about money, producers start putting slick moves, film companies don't look out for your best interests. As soon as I signed my deal, some of my friends turned on me—you just make enemies by being successful."

"It used to be when I'd get into a fist fight, everything would be cool the next morning. But now everything is under a microscope. If I get into a fight or tell someone to (expletive) off, they go, 'Ooh, it's Mr. Hollywood.'"

"Boondock Saints" will still be made. Independent producer-entrepreneur Elie Samaha is now bank-rolling the movie, which is scheduled to begin

shooting in July. But the budget has shrunk to about \$5 million. There is no set cast yet, but the producers are said to be in discussions with Willem Dafoe, Sean Patrick Flannery and Jon Bon Jovi.

It's not the only movie being made involving Duffy. Film-makers Mark Brian Smith and Tony Montana have been taping hundreds of hours of Duffy meetings and rehearsals—as well as his interview with The Times—for a documentary titled "Drunk N' Poor," the name of one of the Brood's songs.

Duffy says he was poor growing up in Exeter, New Hampshire, where his father, who had studied English literature at Harvard, taught high school English. Duffy excelled in English but was otherwise an indifferent student known as a troublemaker.

He enrolled at Colorado State University but soon dropped out, moving to Los Angeles to start a rock band. He worked construction and cooked in a topless bar before landing a bartender's job at Sloats. He was inspired to write a script, like so

many people, by seeing hundreds of bad movies.

"The straw that broke the camel's back was Jean-Claude Van Damme's 'Sudden Death,'" he says. "All I could think was, 'I can do better than that.'"

Duffy had never read a script before, so he borrowed one from a friend and copied its format. When he had a finished script, he gave it to a friend who was working at New Line Cinema. Suddenly Duffy began getting a lot of visitors at the bar—agents, producers and studio executives.

"I was working, so I had to charge 'em all for drinks," he says. "They'd be going on about the script and I'd be saying, 'Hey, it's \$2.50 for the Bud Lite.'"

Enthused by Weinstein's promises of complete autonomy, Duffy sold the script for "Boondock Saints" to Miramax. That's when his troubles began. By most accounts, Weinstein bought the script believing it could be another "Cop Land," a gritty drama with the kind of colorful roles that would act as a magnet for box-office name

actors. But when Duffy had trouble attracting top-level talent, Miramax's enthusiasm quickly cooled.

In fact, once the deal was signed, Weinstein rarely, if ever, returned Duffy's phone calls, Duffy says.

Weinstein wouldn't comment on his dealings with Duffy, which Miramax critics say is just the most recent example of the company's penchant for making headlines with a splashy deal but later abandoning the project.

Not everyone puts the blame solely on Miramax. People who have dealt with Duffy say the novice director created many of his problems himself. When word surfaced that Pitt was interested in the script, Duffy showed no interest, telling friends he didn't like Pitt's Irish accent in the film "The Devil's Own." He wouldn't meet with Damon because he thought the actor wasn't gritty enough for the script. McGregor reportedly liked the script so much that he went out to dinner with Duffy; but the dinner didn't go well and McGregor passed on the script.

Duffy remembers events differently. He says he didn't want Pitt because he had already "done an Irish accent and I didn't think he should do it again." The same went for Damon, who was already making "Good Will Hunting." As for his dinner with McGregor, Duffy sounds mystified: "I don't know what happened. We got drunk, we hugged, it was a Sox- Irish love affair. Then we heard he didn't want to do the movie."

Wahlberg was attached to the movie but dropped out before financing could be completed. Branagh reportedly fell out when no one could meet his price. Maybe actors had second thoughts about putting their careers into the hands of a bar-room rowdy.

Duffy insists that his nights out drinking and brawling with his lunatics are a healthy release. "Having a couple of drinks is our coping mechanism," he says. "What can I tell you—we're a motley bunch. We all have the drinking and fighting problem."

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THE STAR'S WORKSTATION COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

A set of steps, incorporated by a Task Force to counter the Year 2000 problem (PART 1)

Every business leader is involved

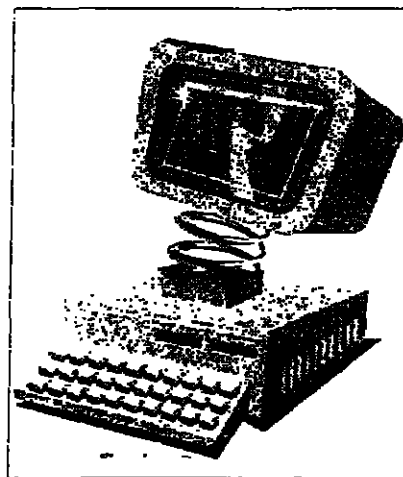
By Samer Abu Libdeh
THE BUSINESS community in Jordan looks forward to the beginning of a new century with optimism. As we draw closer to this historic milestone, the anticipation of a growing number of business owners and managers, here and around the world, is rapidly turning into apprehension.

They are confronted with the possibility that their computer systems and global networks may fail because of an inability to interpret calendar dates beyond 1999.

The implications of the Year 2000 computer problem—or the "millennium bug"—are extremely serious and may occur in every aspect of business operations. The countdown has started, and the deadline cannot be postponed.

No business is immune; every firm is affected—either directly in its own

operations, or indirectly, by the action or inaction of others. The supply chain of Jordan's economy is vulnerable.



Something has to be done to convince all business executives to focus on this problem and to address it. It is a matter of grave national importance.

The Task Force for the

Year 2000 has been formed to address this problem and provide a set of recommendations to be considered by business leaders and the government.

The Task Force for the Year 2000 will make additional information it has produced available to general industry.

This information will include CEO perspectives on the Year 2000 challenge, advice on contingency planning, a check list for small and medium-sized enterprises and guidance for directors. It will also include links to related Internet sites.

This material is primarily addressed to business executives and business owners. It does not delve into detailed technical material, because that is a task best left to experts and is available from specialized firms and the vending community. Thus the below suggestions are addressed primarily to business leaders.

Generous gesture of His Majesty helps deliver more efficient Internet connection

THIS MONTH marked a turning point in the history of the Internet for providers and users alike, owing to the initiative of His Majesty King Hussein, who provided the country with a much needed bandwidth of the highest quality to bolster the Kingdom's Internet infrastructure.

Internet Service Providers should now be able to offer a much faster and more reliable

Internet connection to their subscribers.

Additionally, with the coming increase in the number of local land lines, ISPs should be able to offer an Internet connection very much comparable to western standards.

A group of major Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have officially thanked His Majesty King Hussein for his vision and foresight, which is a

source of pride and inspiration to all Jordanians. The ISPs who thanked His Majesty were Global One, NETS and Index.

The team of specialists at His Majesty's Royal Communications played a very important role, together with the engineers of the Armed Forces, in establishing this new Internet link in record time. ■

News update

HP's massive figures!

● A report on Hewlett-Packard (HP), the world's largest printer manufacturer, offered some stunning figures.

Hewlett-Packard makes some 2 million printers every month! Of these 500,000 are ink jet printers—this could be an indication that the ratio of laser to ink jet is 3 to 1.

Also, Hewlett-Packard has an installed user base of some 20 million printers worldwide! To understand the massive size of this number,

you would have to imagine that, if all these printers were in the Arab Near East, every single citizen in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon would have a printer!

In light of this report, Hewlett-Packard is undoubtedly a giant.

3 million AutoCAD users worldwide

● AutoDesk, the software company that produces AutoCAD, the internationally renowned engineering and computer-aided design appli-

cation, has announced that AutoCAD sales have broken the 3 million mark worldwide.